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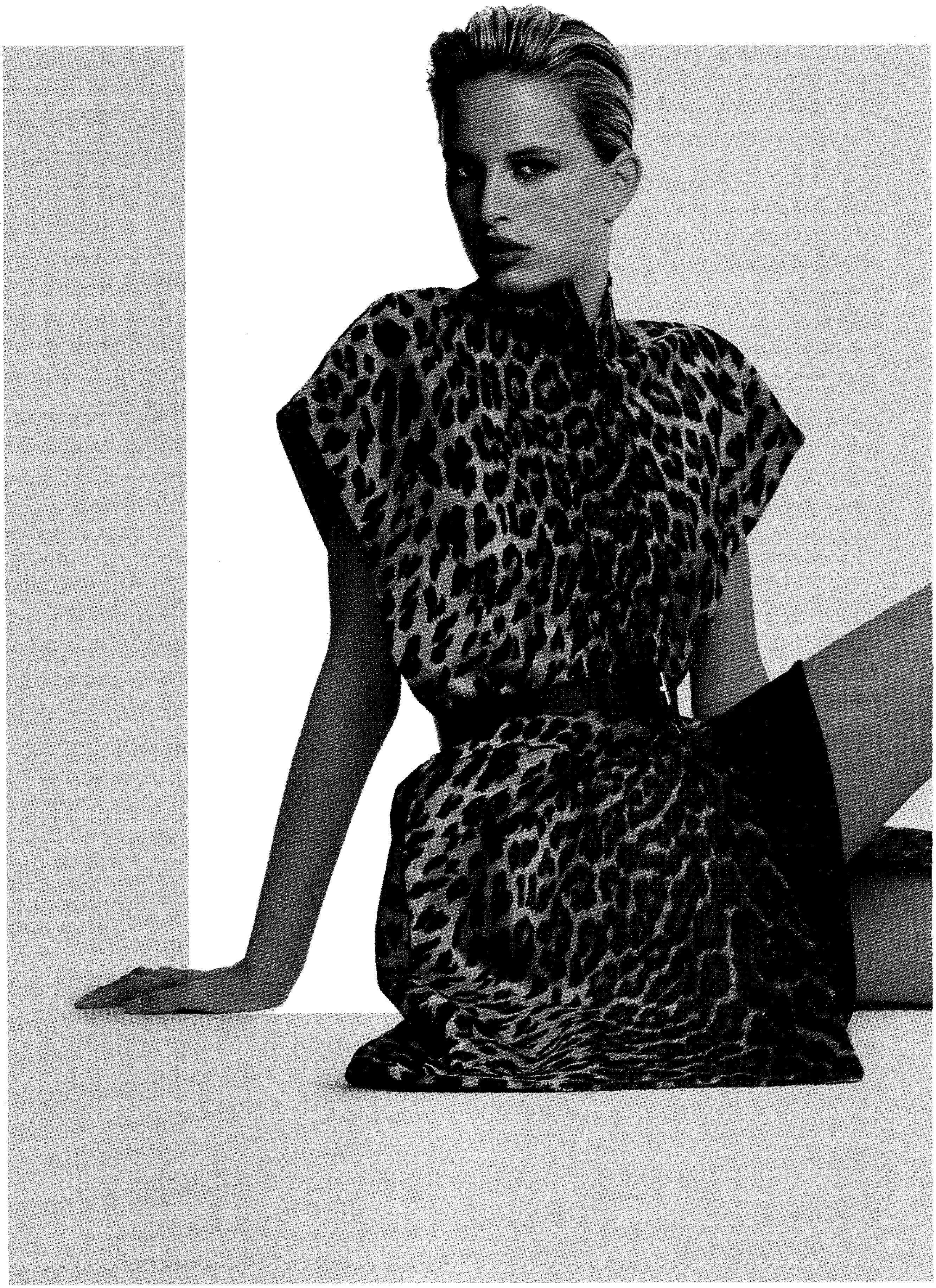
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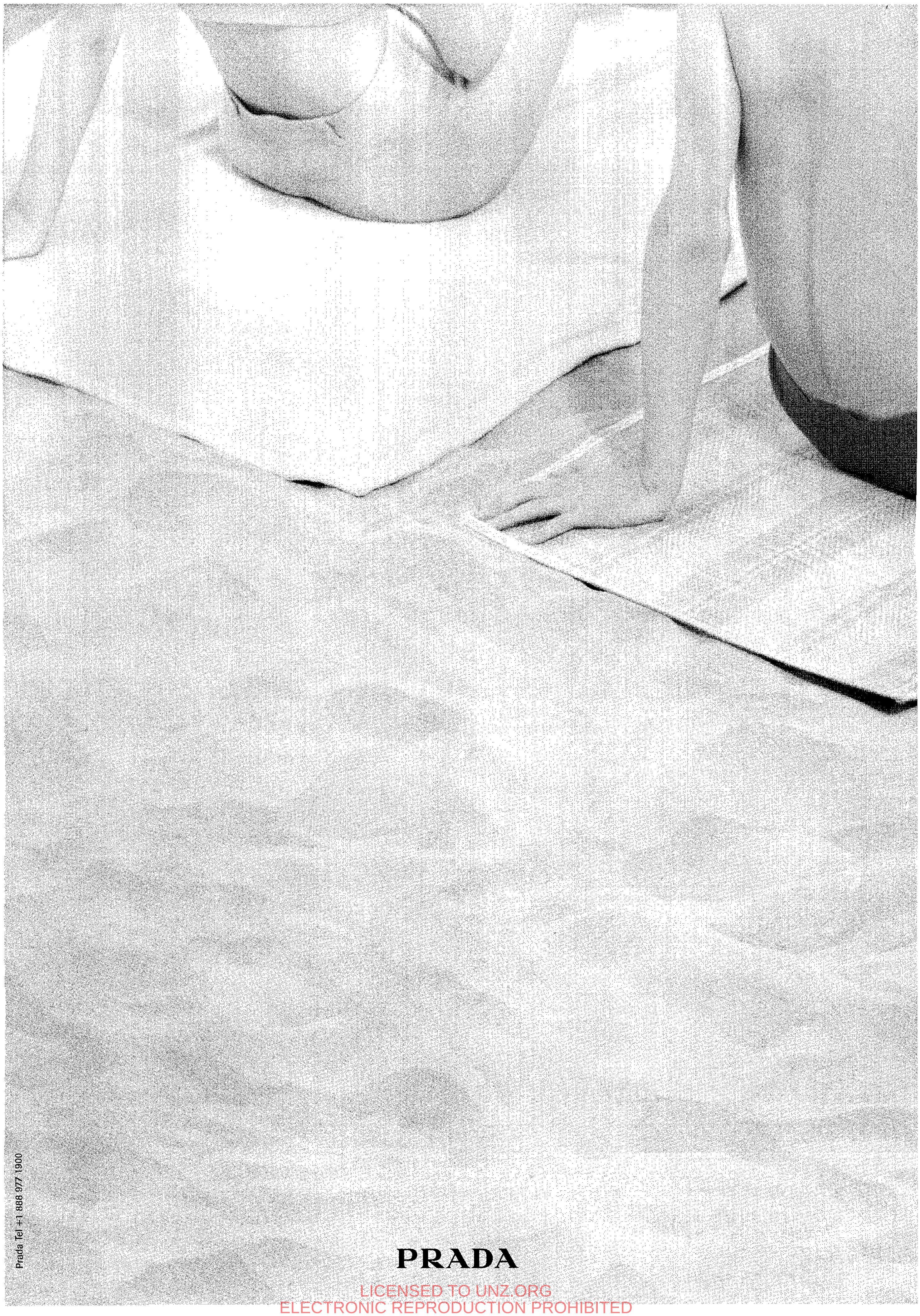
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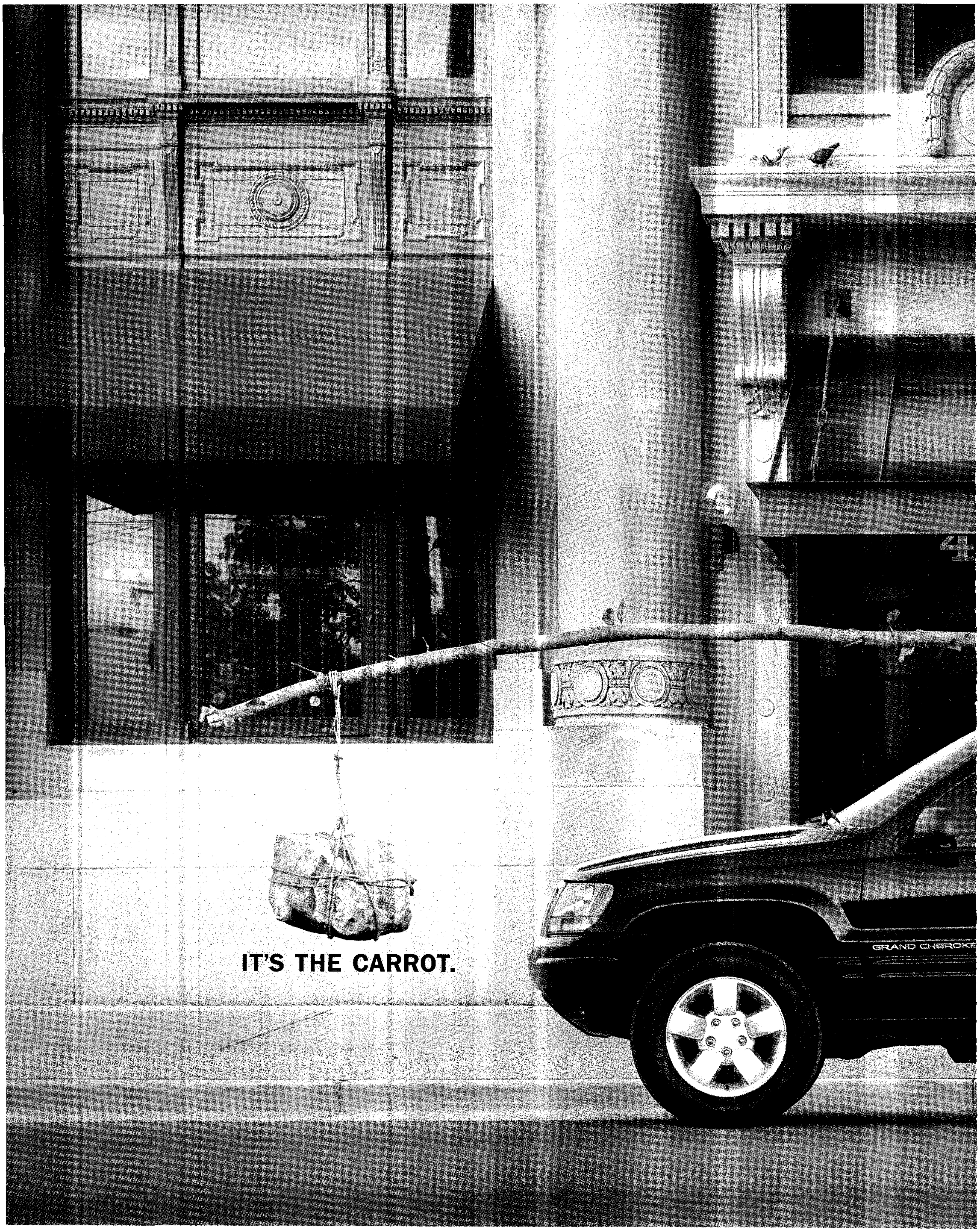

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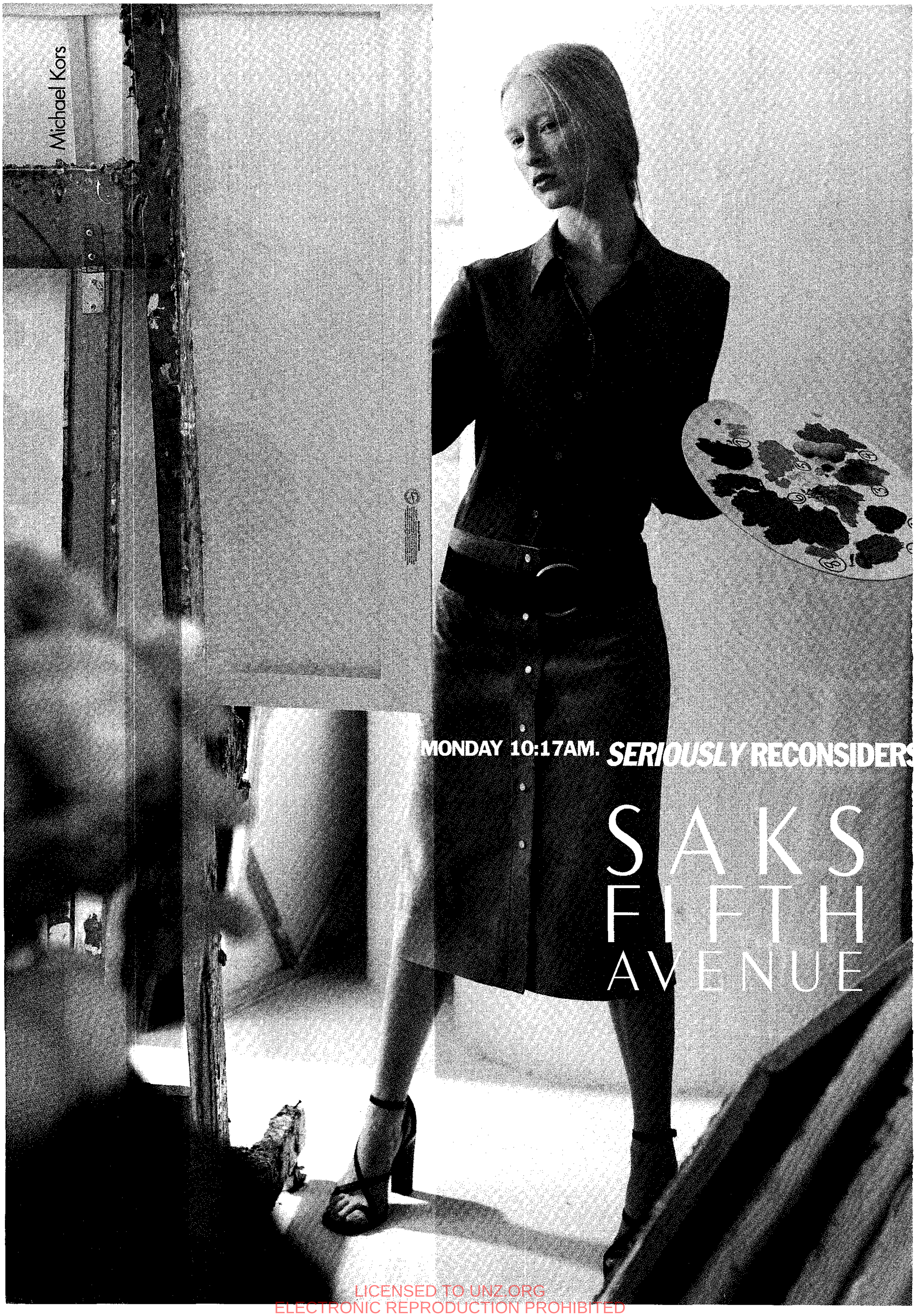
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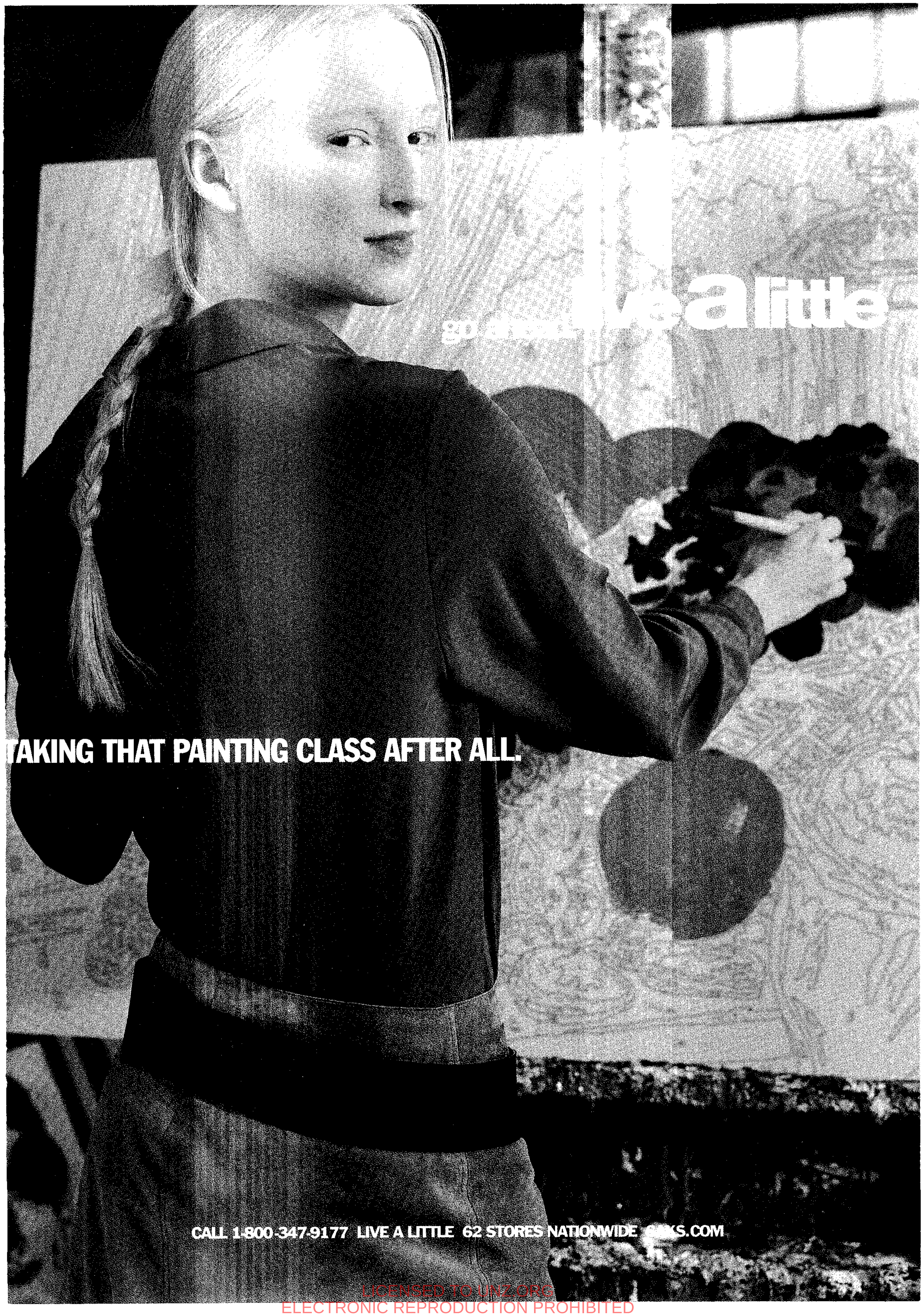
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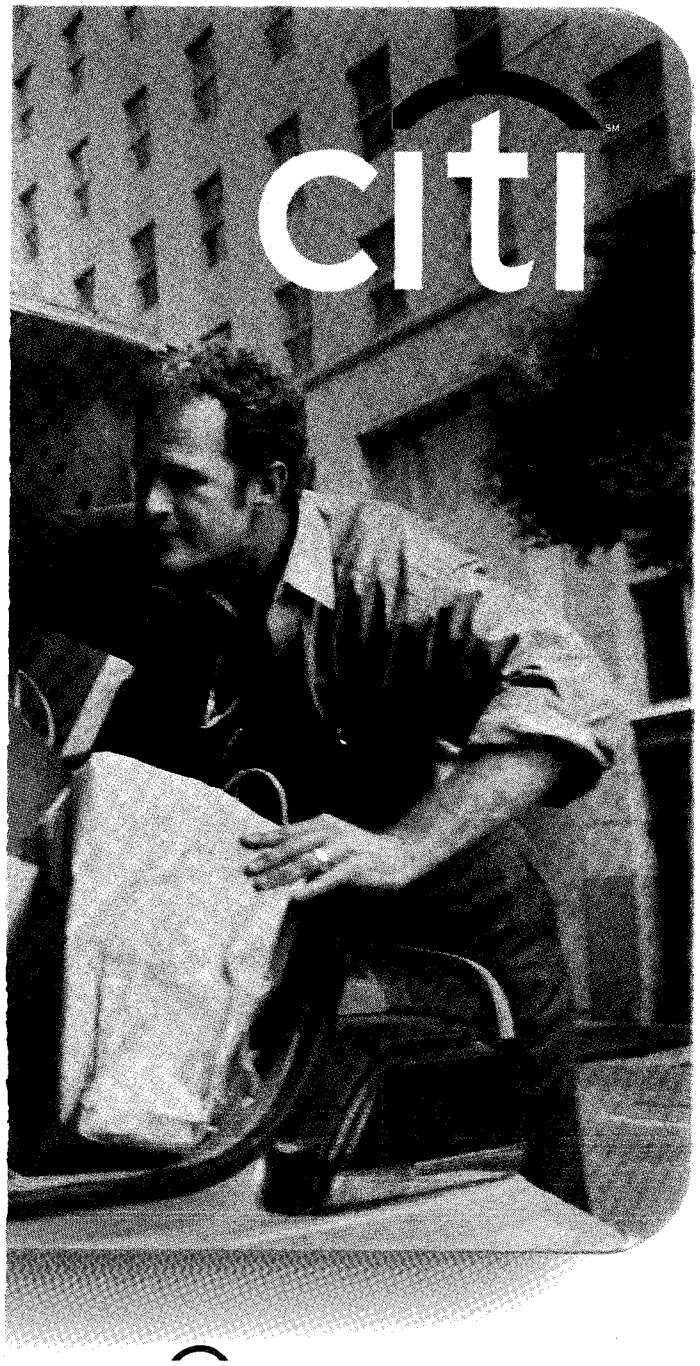

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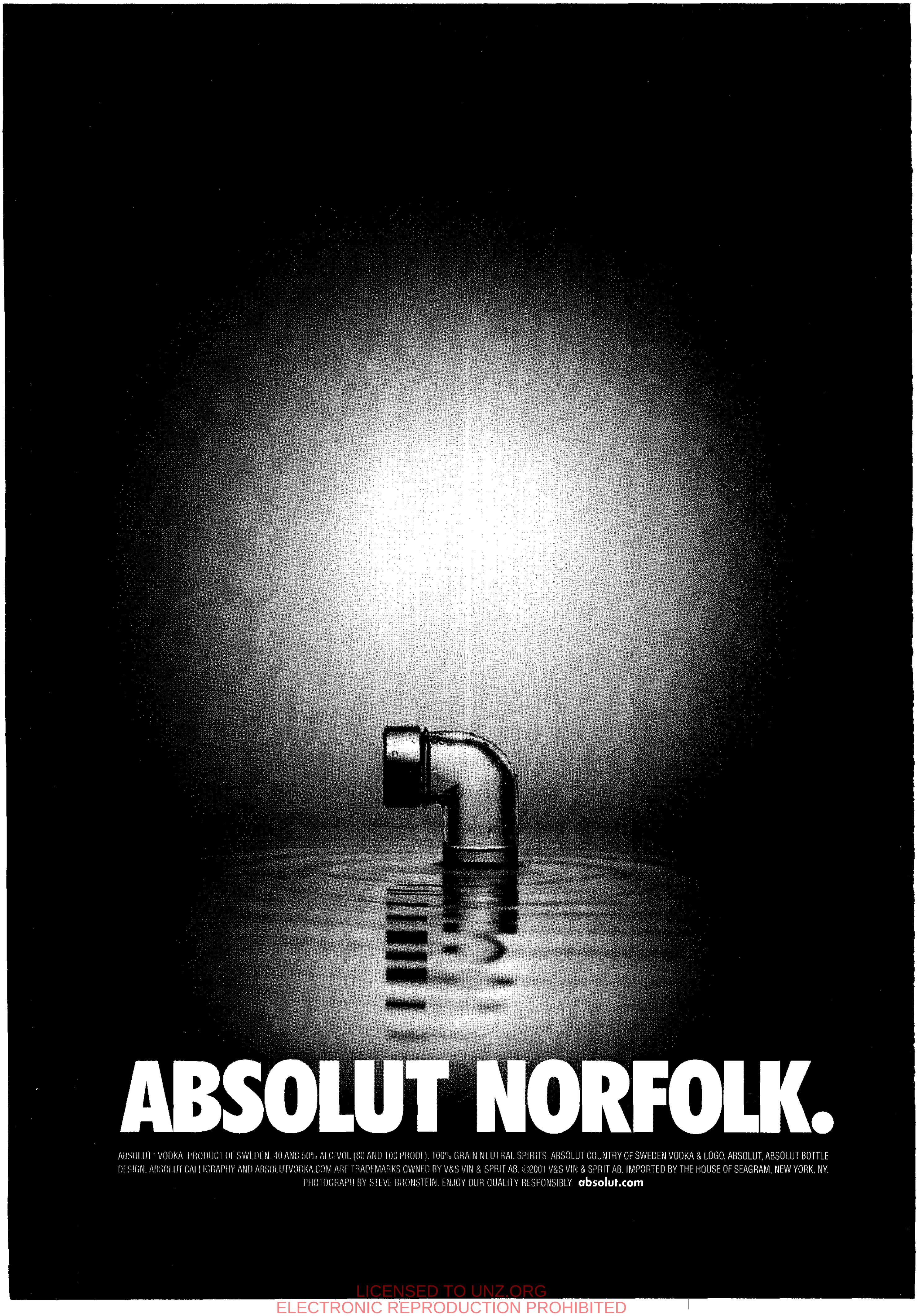

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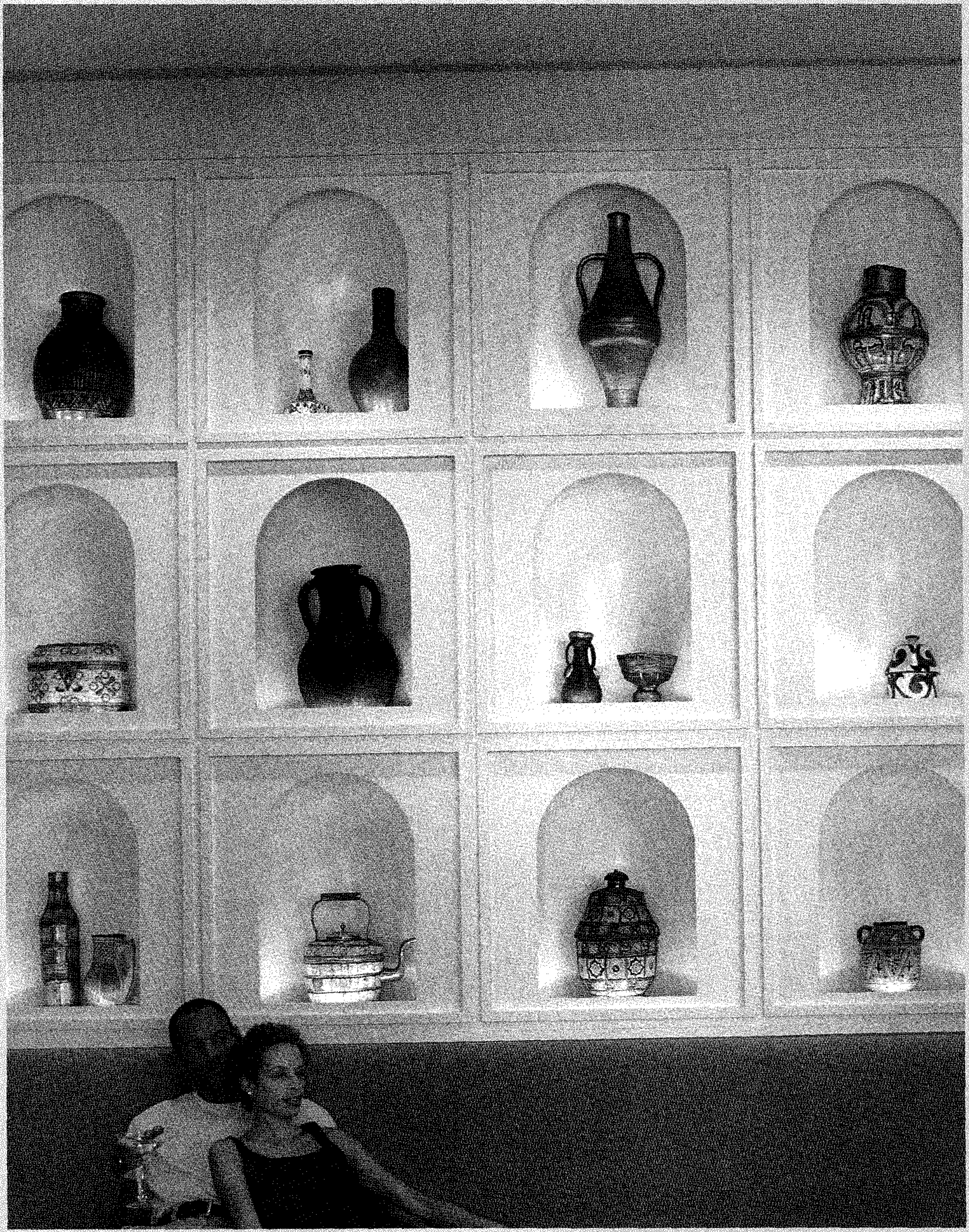

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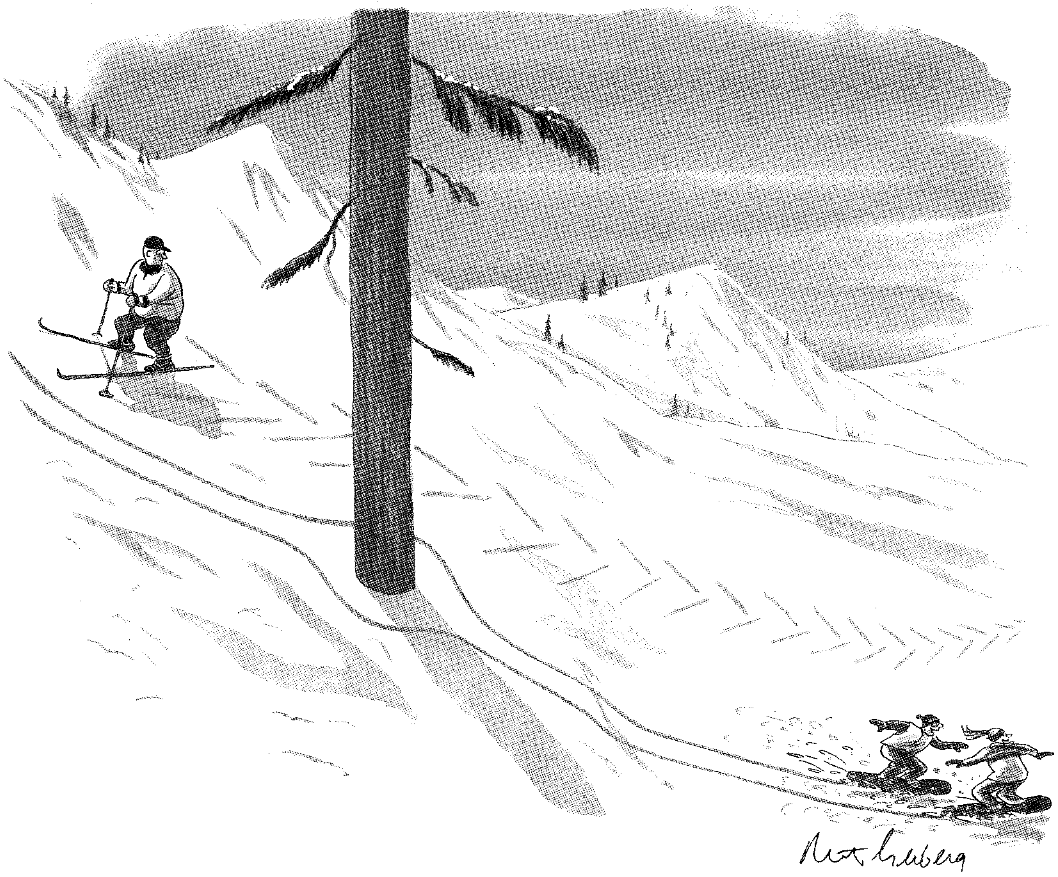

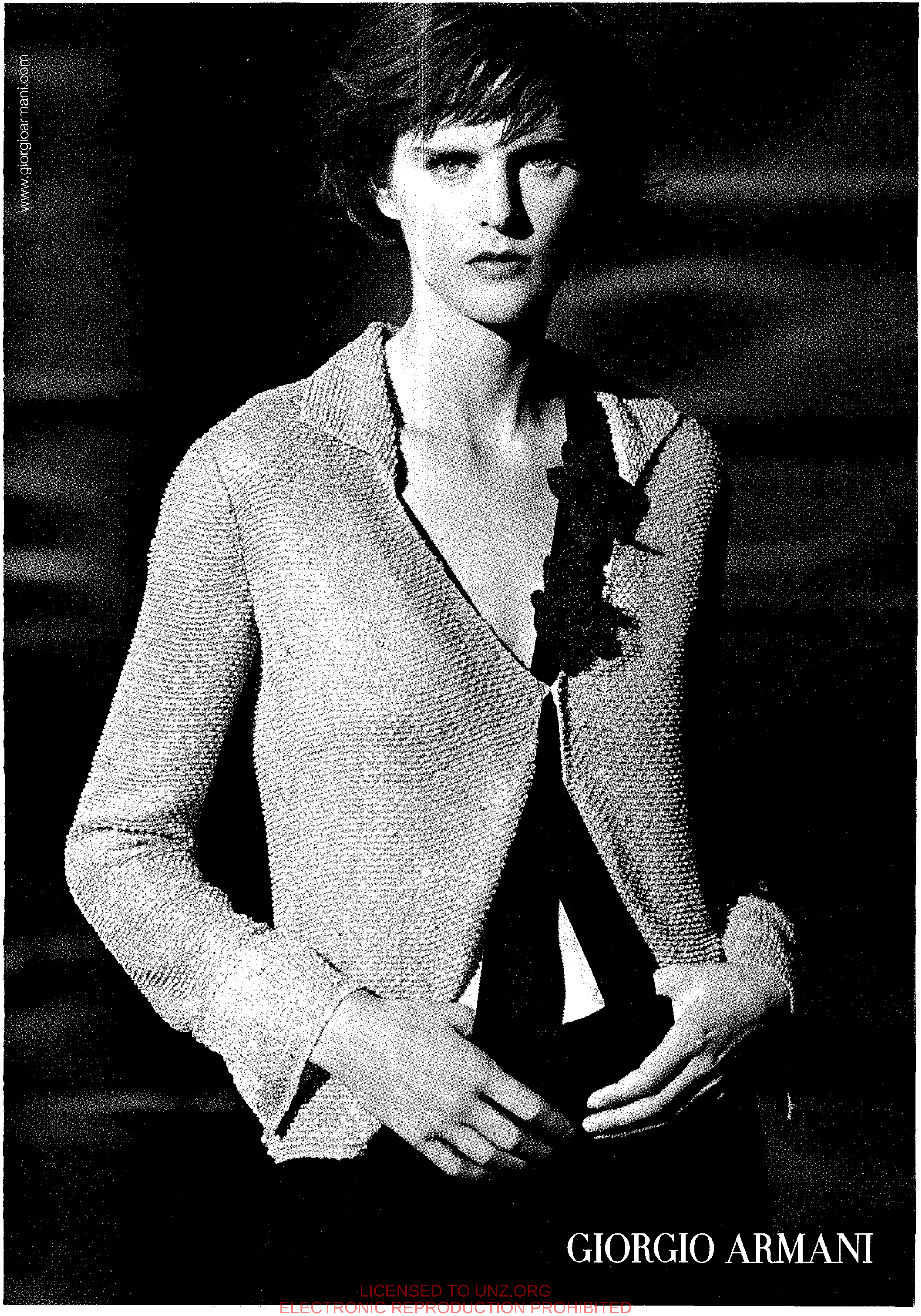
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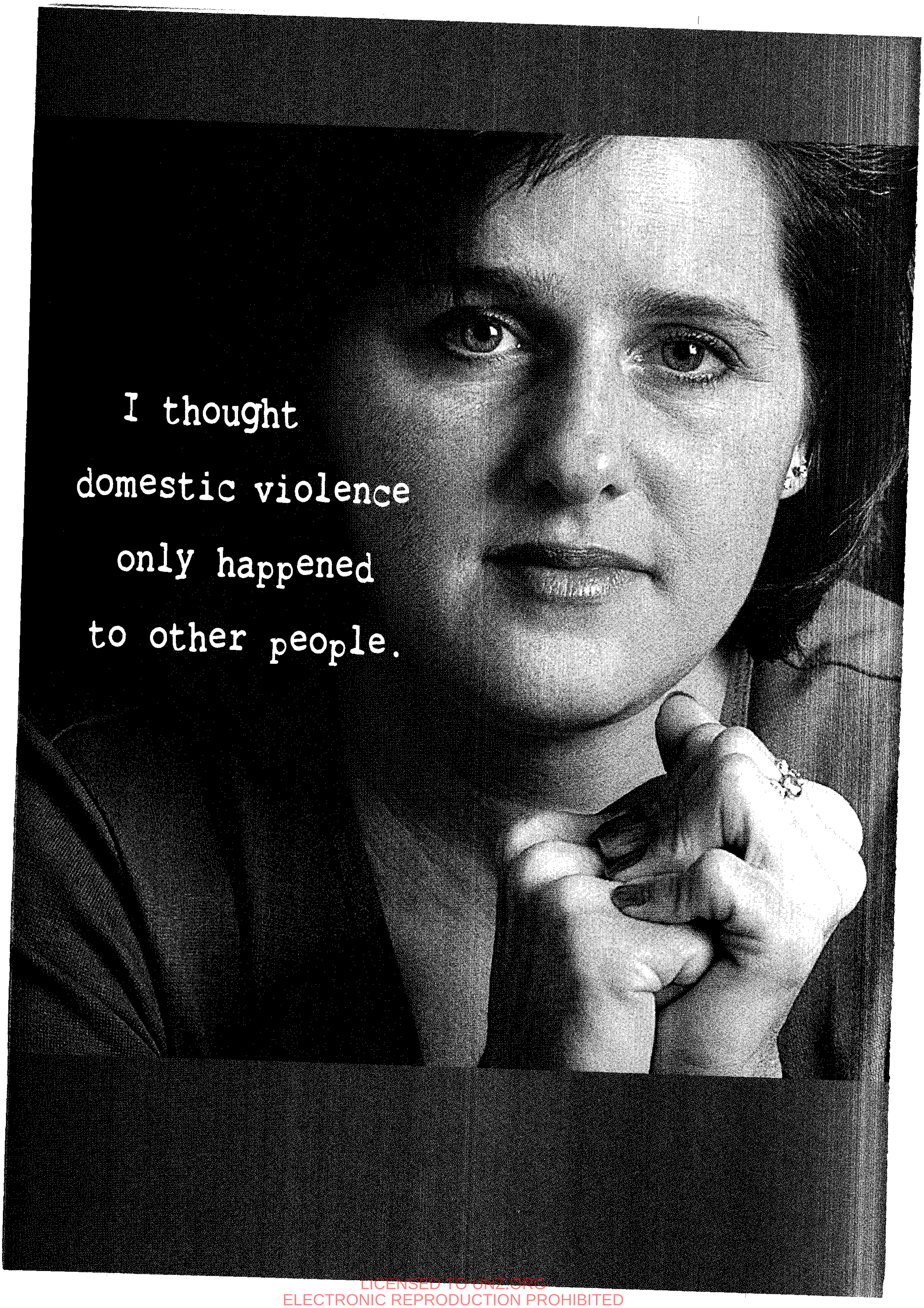
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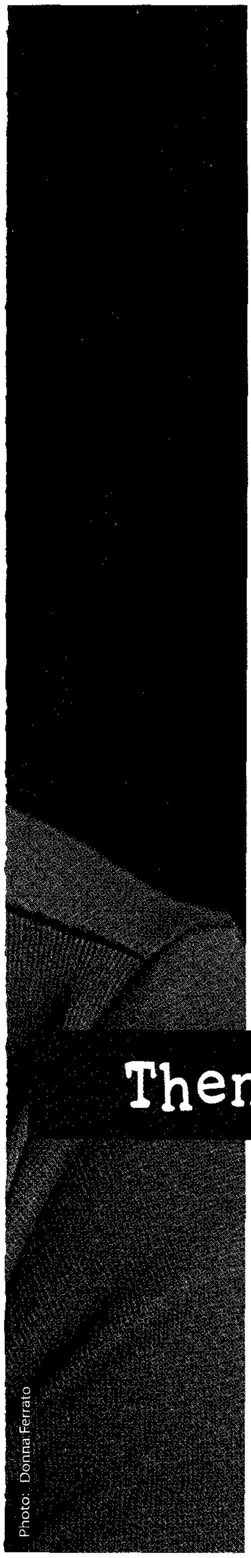

HELPING END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

When Shari's "perfect" boyfriend turned violent, she felt trapped, alone and worthless.

Beyond the beatings and harassment, she was consumed with the fear that he would hurt her children if she tried to escape. Finally, Shari found SAFEHOME, a program for victims of domestic violence in Johnson County, Kansas that gave her counseling and support — and the courage to begin a better life.

As a career woman and mother of two, Shari knows firsthand that domestic abuse is not the problem of "other" people. It affects millions of women, men and children in every community, regardless of race or income. The time to stop the violence is now.

That's why we established *The Philip Morris Campaign Against Domestic Violence.* Our support of SAFEHOME and similar organizations nationwide is just one of the ways we've been making a difference to communities in need for more than forty years.

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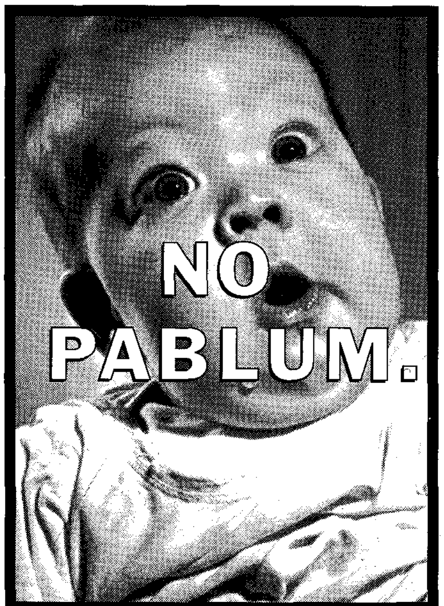

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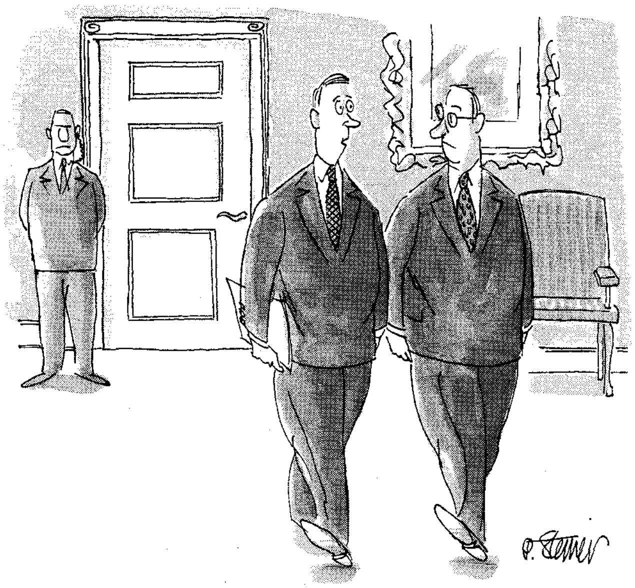

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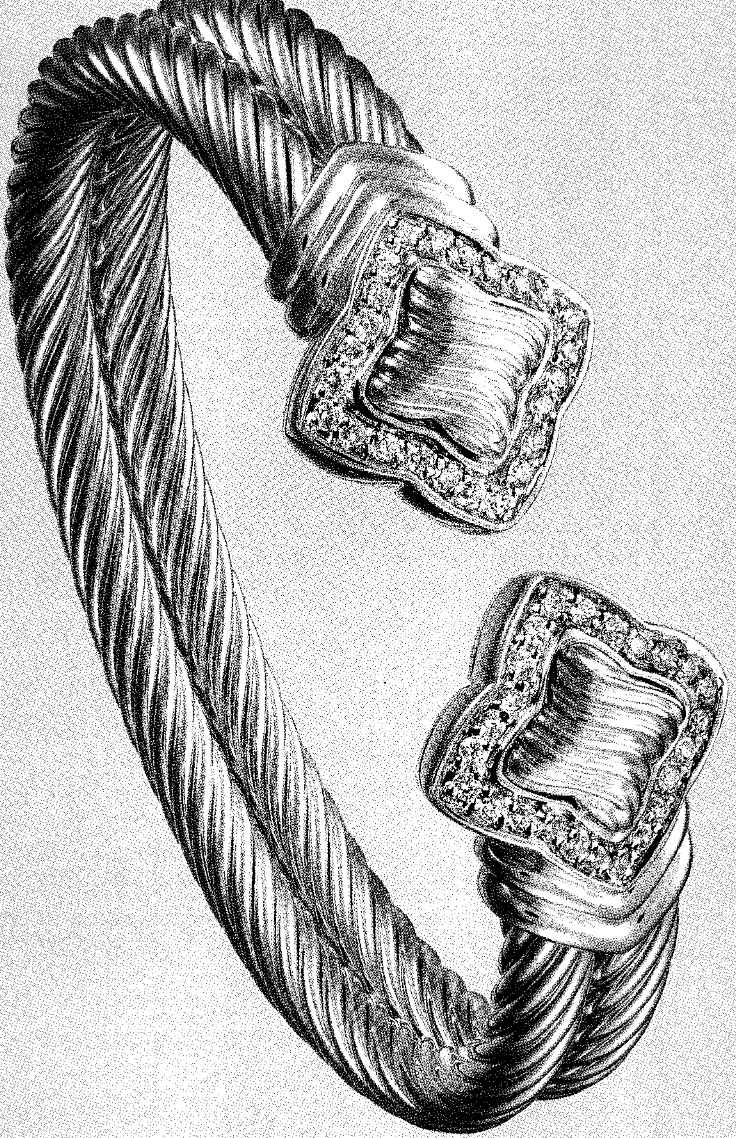

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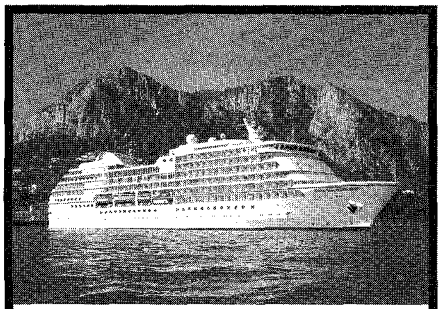

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WAITING FOR SHARON

Despite an otherwise remarkable effort, Jeffrey Goldberg fails to focus on the aspect of the confrontation between Palestinians and Israelis which most disturbs the Arab world ("Arafat's Gift," January 29th). It was not Ariel Sharon's calculated provocation on the Temple Mount that precipitated the past four months of civil unrest. Rather, it was the deaths of seven Palestinians who, Goldberg routinely notes, were killed by Israeli forces on the Temple Mount the next day—followed, day after day, month after month, by more killings and woundings of demonstrators. There are, of course, Palestinians who are waging a deadly guerrilla war, but the great majority of men and boys who have been killed were armed, if at all, with nothing but stones. No other police force in the democratic world—not even the British one in Northern Ireland—has such license to shoot at demonstrators.

J. Peter Flemming
Brooklyn, N.Y.

It is clear from Goldberg's story that Yasir Arafat would rather be the leader of a downtrodden, stateless, and irate people than deal with economic challenges and political opposition as a head of state. The Camp David summit is only the latest instance of the Palestinians' never missing an opportunity to miss an opportunity, as Abba Eban, one of Israel's founders, used to say. After all, the breakthrough at Oslo came only after the P.L.O. lost its Soviet patron and miscalculated by supporting Iraq in the Gulf War. The chance of peace in the Middle East will remain remote until the Palestinians find a leader who is truly interested in building a nation.

Daniel Robbins
New York City

Goldberg mentions Ariel Sharon's successful tank assault on Egypt in 1973 only in passing—the equivalent of profiling Joe Namath and just touching on the Jets' defeat of the Colts in the Super Bowl. Back then, I was a tank commander in the U.S. Army, based in West Germany. To those of us waiting for the Cold War to turn hot, Sharon was a legend on the level of Patton and Rommel. Sharon's attack has been credited with ending a war that could have left Israel an occupied state, or worse. Goldberg writes that Arafat's stubbornness helped the former general's campaign for Prime Minister, but the real reason Sharon has won the election is that people inside and outside Israel know what he is capable of, and are eager to see his next move.

Neil G. Gussman
Lancaster, Pa.

Arafat's rejection of the Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak's peace proposals at Camp David is not as mysterious as Goldberg implies. While the deal sounded profoundly generous from Barak's standpoint—Israel would have given up about ninety per cent of the West Bank and part of Jerusalem—the state thus created would have been broken up into noncontiguous pieces of land, bisected by roads under the control of the Israeli military. The new Palestinian sections of Jerusalem would also have been fragmented enclaves. No one would expect Israelis to live in such a state, and no one should have expected the Palestinians to do so.

Kathleen Christison
Santa Fe, N.M.

CLARIFICATION: A piece in The Talk of the Town (February 5th) implied that the attorney Leonard Garment represented Marc Rich in his quest for a Presidential pardon. He did not. Garment did represent Rich between 1984 and 1993 in discussions with the Office of the United States Attorney concerning the charges against him.

•

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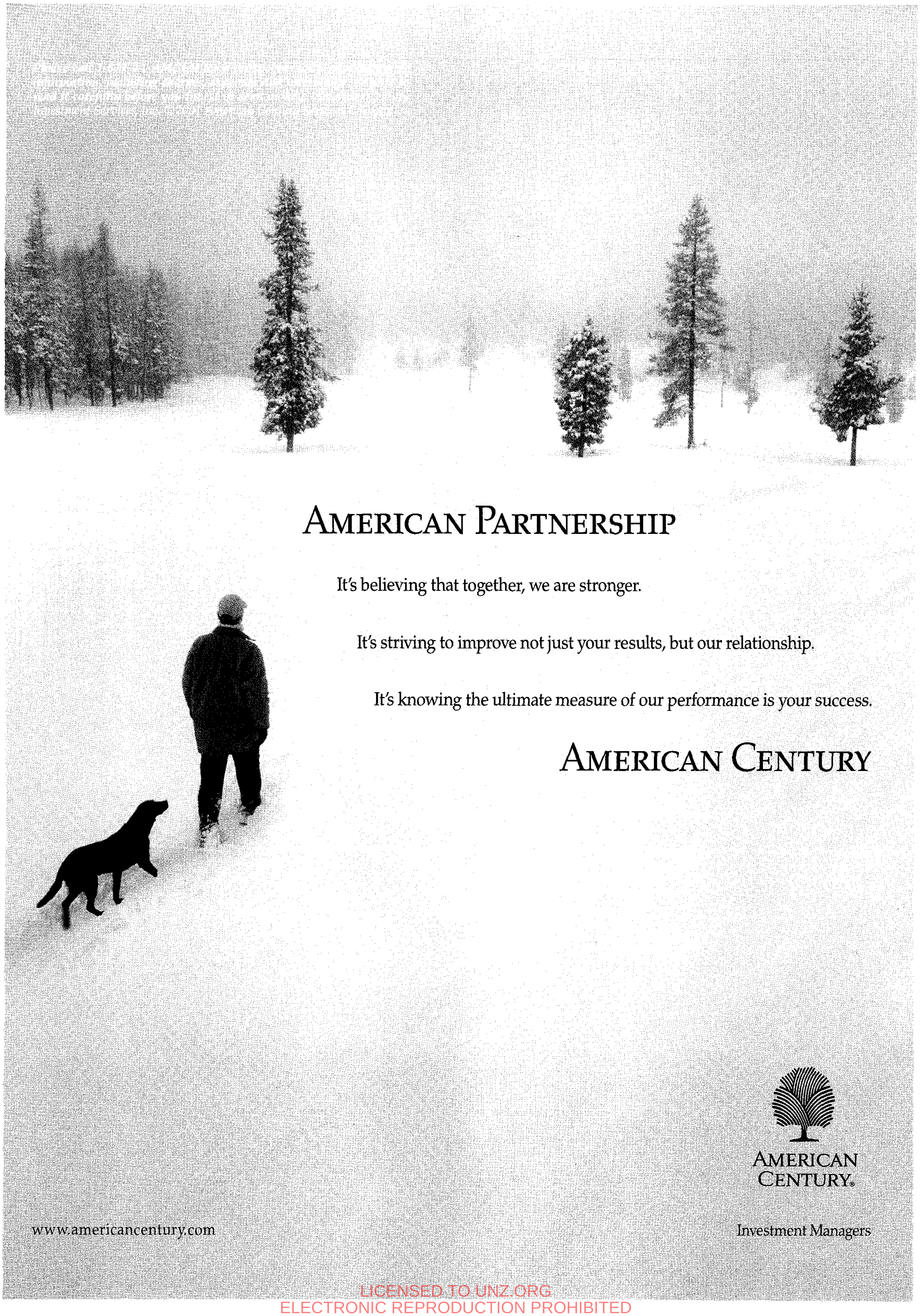

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BOY GETS GIRL
Rebecca Gilman's latest play deals with a journalist whose life is turned upside down after she rejects a blind date. In previews through Feb. 18. Opens Feb. 20 at 8. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

A CLASS ACT
Ed Kleban's life following his success as the lyricist of "A Chorus Line" is the basis of this musical. With songs by Mr. Kleban and a book by Linda Kline and Lonny Price. Mr. Price is the director. In previews. (Ambassador, 219 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

DESIGN FOR LIVING
Alan Cumming, Jennifer Ehle, and Dominic West are the dissolute trio in Noel Coward's 1932 comedy. Joe Mantello is the director. Previews begin Feb. 16. (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 719-1300.)

DOGEATERS
The Philippines in the eighties is the setting for Jessica Hagedorn's play, which she based on her 1990 novel of the same title. In previews. (Public, 425 Lafayette St. 239-6200.)

HIGH DIVE
A one-woman comedy about the perils of family vacations, written and performed by Leslie Ayvazian and presented by the MCC Theatre. In previews through Feb. 25. Opens Feb. 26 at 8. (120 W. 28th St. 727-7765.)

JUDGMENT AT NUREMBERG
Maximilian Schell and George Grizzard lead the cast in a National Actors Theatre production of Abby Mann's drama, which he based on his 1957 teleplay and subsequent novel. John Tillinger is the director. Previews begin Feb. 15. (Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 239-6280.)

LEAVING QUEENS
Kate Moira Ryan and Kim D. Sherman's musical traces three generations of an Irish-American family living in New York City. Previews begin Feb. 25. (Women's Project Theatre, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

LOBBY HERO
A new play by Kenneth Lonergan ("This Is Our Youth," "The Waverly Gallery"), about a security guard, his supervisor, two cops, and a murder investigation. Mark Brokaw is the director. Previews begin Feb. 16. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

RACE
Ferdinand Bruckner's 1933 drama about a German medical student who leaves his Jewish girlfriend to join the Nazi Party. In previews through Feb. 18. Opens Feb. 20 at 8. (Classic Stage Company, 136 E. 13th St. 677-4210.)

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SAVED
The 1965 political drama by Edward Bond, staged by Theatre for a New Audience. Previews Feb. 17-24. Opens Feb. 25 at 6:30. (American Place, 111 W. 46th St. 239-6200.)

A SKULL IN CONNEMARA
The second installment in the Irish playwright Martin McDonagh's Leenane trilogy (which includes "The Beauty Queen of Leenane" and "The Lonesome West"), presented by the Roundabout Theatre Company. Gordon Edelstein is the director. In previews through Feb. 21. Opens Feb. 22 at 7. (Gramercy, 127 E. 23rd St. 777-4900.)

TEN UNKNOWNS
Donald Sutherland stars in Jon Robin Baitz's new drama as a reclusive artist living in Mexico, whose life is disrupted by three unwanted visitors (Julianna Margulies, Denis O'Hare, and Justin Kirk). Daniel Sullivan is the director. In previews. (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

CELLINI
Reg Rogers portrays the sixteenth-century Florentine sculptor, in a new play by John Patrick Shanley, who is also directing. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 246-4422.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
The Pearl Theatre Company's staging of Chekhov's last play. (80 St. Marks Pl. 598-9802. Closes Feb. 25.)

THE DEVIL'S MUSIC: THE LIFE AND BLUES OF BESSIE SMITH
Miche Braden stars as the Empress of the Blues in Angelo Parra's new play, which imagines a concert on the evening of the singer's death. Braden has a strong set of pipes, and when she belts out fourteen of Smith's signature songs she seems to be channelling the spirit of this larger-than-life figure. But her monologues and the conversations she carries on with her accompanist, Pickle (Terry Walker)—about her sexual adventures, her alcoholism, her encounters with racism, and, perhaps most melodramatically, her unsuccessful clash with the justice system to keep her child—simply fail to ignite. (Theatre 3, at 311 W. 43rd St. 279-4200. Closes March 3.)

DIDO, QUEEN OF CARTHAGE
Christopher Marlowe was no Shakespeare—his poetry is less sustained, his politics aren't as subtle, and his characters are often stolen from old tales, not reimagined—but his version of the story of Dido and Aeneas, as directed by David Herskovits for his Target Margin Theatre company, is charming. It's staged as a series of tableaux incorporating gestures and blocking that spring from Renaissance paintings, a device that plays up the hoariness of some elements of the story to comic effect and allows the more naturalistic scenes to be truly moving. The fall of Troy, for instance, as told by Adrian LaTourelle's Aeneas, is gripping. Steven Ratazzi, as Hermes, and Abigail Savage, as a sly Cupid, are particularly good among the rest of the cast. (Ohio Theatre, 66 Wooster St. 358-3657. Closes Feb. 24.)

THE DINNER PARTY
Neil Simon's new comedy is set in an opulent restaurant in Paris, and his six characters—three divorced couples—are not the usual Simon-Americans of his "Suite" plays. They are French, or are meant to be. Still, the play is essentially traditional fare; the running, or limping, gags are in ready supply, and the secondhand shtick, often in the form of aeons-old alimony jokes, flows freely along this Boulevard of Broken Marriages. (11/6/00) (Music Box, 239 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

END OF THE WORLD PARTY
A comedy by Chuck Ranberg, about a group of men who rent a Fire Island house together each year. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

EXCUSE ME, I'M TALKING!
Annie Korzen sings, tells stories, and portrays more than forty characters in her solo show about being a Jewish woman in America. (Duke Theatre, 229 W. 42nd St. 239-6200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY 2001: A SPOOF ODYSSEY
These days, ridiculing Broadway is like shooting fish in a barrel, so it's amazing that the latest version of Gerard Alessandrini's long-running satirical revue manages to fire off as many good ones as it does. Alessandrini can always be counted on for a smart laugh, but not all of the numbers here are up to his usual high standards of comic cruelty. Thank goodness the wonderful Christine Pedi is still in the show; her loopy, loving imitations of yesteryear's biggies—Elaine Stritch, Liza Minnelli, Ethel Merman, and Barbra Streisand—are more than worth the trip and the price of a ticket. (Stardust, Broadway at 51st St. 239-6200.)

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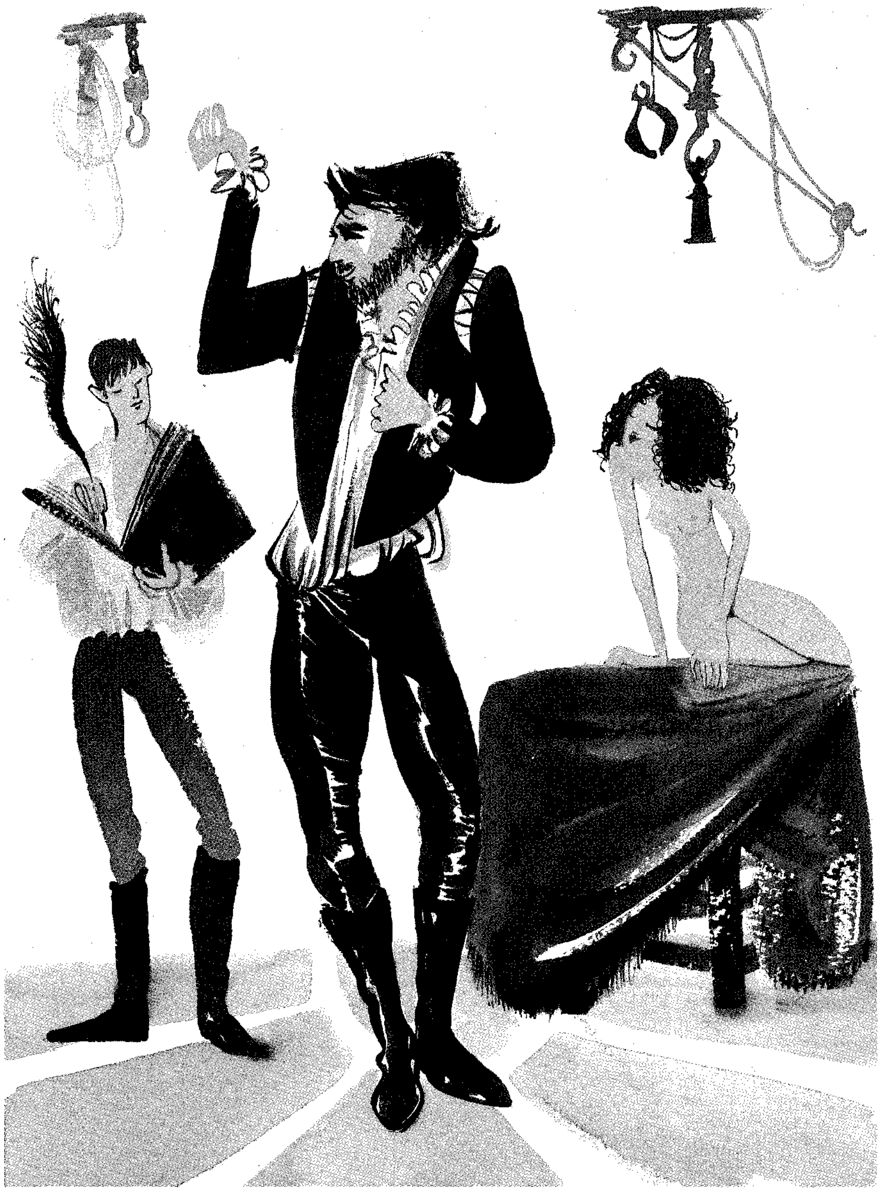
FORCE CONTINUUM

A drama about a rookie New York City cop which traces the careers of three generations of black policemen. Written by Kia Corthron. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 239-6200. Closes Feb. 25.)

FOUR GUYS NAMED JOSÉ . . . AND UNA MUJER NAMED MARIA

This crowd-pleasing, crayon-colored revue of Latin song and dance is knowingly broad and hammy. But the talented cast sends up the singers and songs that helped create Latin stereotypes and delivers the remaining material—dance songs, songs of nostalgia for one's homeland, songs of love, songs about women named Maria—with exuberant wit and affection. (Blue Angel, 323 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)



Reg Rogers, in John Patrick Shanley's new play, "Cellini," at Second Stage.

THE FULL MONTY

Terrence McNally and David Yazbek's musical version of the 1997 movie, about a group of unemployed factory workers who try to earn some cash by stripping, has all the spirit and charm of the original but on a much larger, pizzazzier scale. If you don't find yourself laughing consistently (and tearing up occasionally), well, then, maybe you don't *deserve* to see six men prancing around in red G-strings. (Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

HYMN TO THE RISING SUN

La Mama's celebration of Black History Month continues with a staging of Paul Green's 1936 drama about convicts on a North Carolina chain gang, directed by Barbara Montgomery. (74A E. 4th St. 475-7710. Closes Feb. 18.)

AN IDIOT DIVINE

With an assortment of musical instruments and his own otherworldly voice, Rinde Eckert channels two "edjits." The first is a murderer doing time in prison, who teaches himself how to play the accordion and dowse for water. The second is harder to pin down: he speaks with a brogue, dresses like an Indian guru, plays a horn, a guitar, and various bells and whistles beautifully, and discourses amusingly on the individual personalities of his five fingers. With these talents, and his ability to perform one-man duets, Eckert elevates incoherence to a poignant clarity. Directed by Ellen McLaughlin. (45 Bleecker Theatre, at 45 Bleecker St. 307-4100. Closes Feb. 18.)

THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING OSCAR

Micheál MacLiammóir's biographical sketch of Oscar Wilde is less a play than it is a static history lesson. Between bits of dry chronology that offer few scintillating details of Wilde's life, Niall Buggy recites some of Wilde's poetry and letters, acts out scenes from his plays, and reads extensively from "The Picture of Dorian Gray." It's a stiff, Disney's Hall of Presidents approach, and one that doesn't do justice to this colorful and flamboyant figure. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 727-2737. Closes March 4.)

ISN'T IT ROMANTIC?

The Worth Street Theatre Company's staging of Wendy Wasserstein's 1983 comedy, directed by Jeff Cohen. (Tribeca Playhouse, 111 Reade St., at West Broadway. 206-1515.)

JANE EYRE

John Caird and Paul Gordon's musical is respectful of and faithful to Brontë's original, but it needs to be brilliant and piercing, and it isn't. Though the show's book is a fair job, the music is schmaltzy, and the modern stage devices—the endless projections of trees and sky may make you feel like you're watching the Weather Channel—don't quite bring Brontë to life. The appealing cast is led by Marla Schaffel, who is the very picture of the Jane Eyre in your mind's eye. Directed by Mr. Caird and Scott Schwartz. (Brooks Atkinson, 256 W. 47th St. 307-4100.)

THE MOON OF THE CARIBBEES

A very early (1917), somewhat peculiar, and remarkably offensive play by Eugene O'Neill which nonetheless makes a good evening of theatre. The action takes place during a single evening on a ship docked somewhere in the Caribbean, among British and American sailors and the local women who come aboard to sell them fruit, rum, and sex. The men as a group live by unstated rules that they don't understand but that prevent them from sating their passions; they're fixated on anyone who opposes their lot, yet they're tantalized by the possibility of transformation offered by outsiders. The director, Simon Hammerstein, deftly focusses on these themes—they come up again and again in O'Neill's later work, and are fascinating to see in their raw state—and he makes impressive use of the Bat Theatre's constricted basement stage, to contain the high emotion that eventually explodes into violence. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St., between Broadway and Church St. 226-0051. Closes Feb. 24.)

NOW THAT COMMUNISM IS DEAD, MY LIFE FEELS EMPTY

Richard Foreman's forty-eighth play has many of the whacked-out elements audiences have come to expect from the father of downtown theatre—a disorienting set loaded with veiled signifiers, nubile women whose semi-sadomasochistic garb is offset by intellectual-nerd glasses; a gorilla; an outright air of menace; and characters who seem both alienated and—especially lately—somehow perfectly at home in it all. It has little to do with the fall of Communism, of course, but it also has very little new or challenging about it. Foreman's plays used to be an enigmatic, exhilarating blow to the brain. With this latest work, the formula has gotten so comfortable that it seems like shtick. (St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 533-4650.)

THE PLAY ABOUT THE BABY

Marian Seldes and Brian Murray portray a mysterious older couple who convince a pair of new parents that their baby was never born, in a new play by Edward Albee. David Esbjornson is the director. (Reviewed in this issue.) (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 239-6200.)

PROOF

The young playwright David Auburn's drama about the possible link between genius and mental illness stars Mary-Louise Parker as the daughter of a brilliant but unstable University of Chicago mathematician. Parker's character appears to have similar gifts and, possibly, similar troubles. Auburn has real depth and a real voice, and he has taken on some biggies here, but in the end you wish the play were a little richer, a little less simply resolved. Directed by Daniel Sullivan. (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

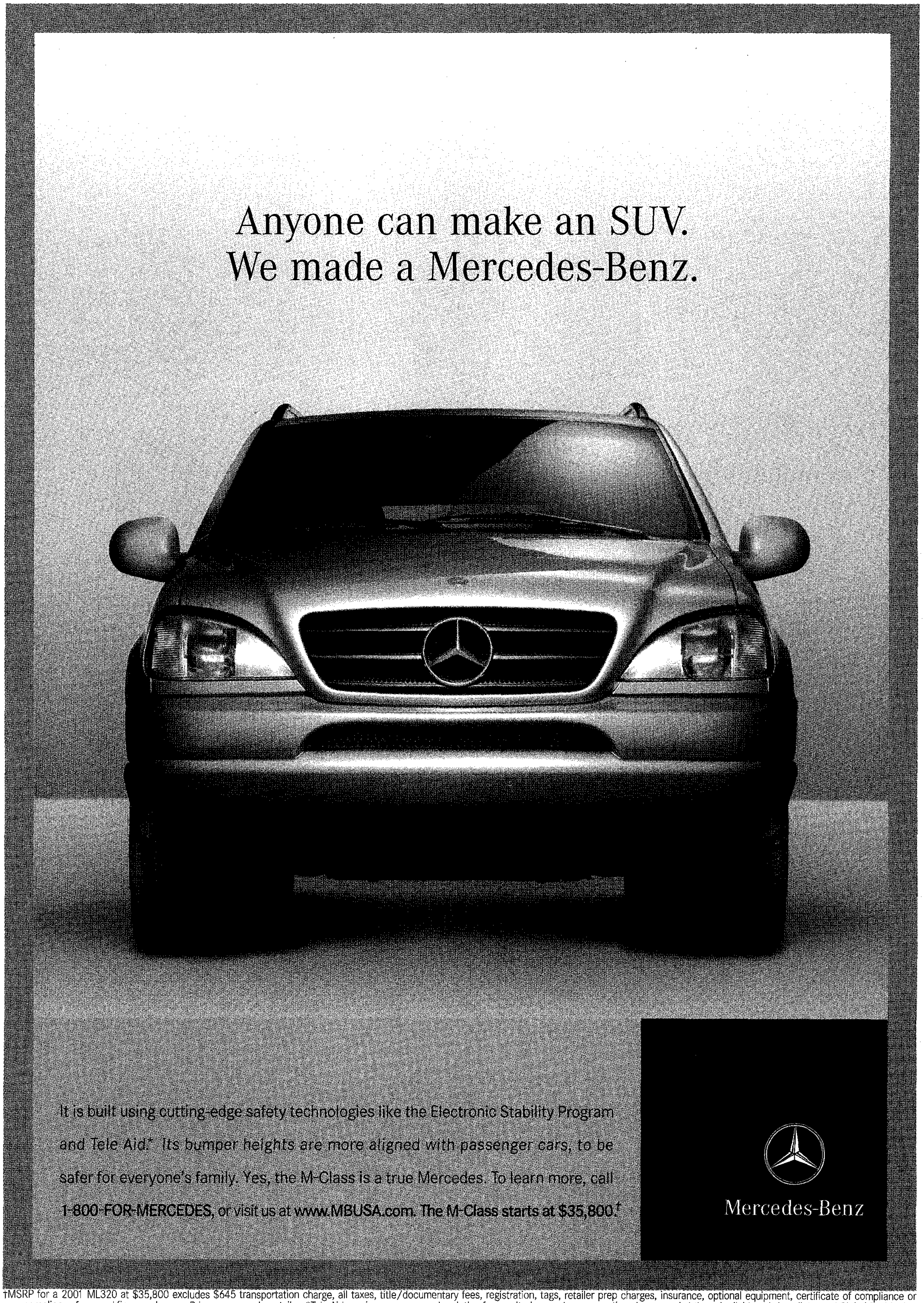
RESIDENT ALIEN

Bette Bourne portrays Quentin Crisp in Tim Fountain's play about the life and work of the late East Village writer. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 460-5475. Closes Feb. 25.)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

Rather than a revival of Richard O'Brien's 1973 musical, a glam tribute to fifties horror flicks, Christopher Ashley's production is an unsexy and oddly earnest homage to the 1975 cult-movie adaptation. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200.)

RUBEN TOLEDO



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THE SEARCH FOR SIGNS OF INTELLIGENT LIFE IN THE UNIVERSE
Lily Tomlin is back on Broadway in the one-woman, thirteen-character show written for her by her longtime collaborator, Jane Wagner, and what's not to love about that? Tomlin is terrific—moving, funny, and as lithe and vibrant as she was when she first performed the show here, fifteen years ago. This is a chance to see a remarkable life force in action. (11/27/00) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

SEE BOB RUN
Susan O'Connor portrays a talkative hitchhiker, in a revised version of Daniel MacIvor's 1987 drama. (K.G.B., 85 E. 4th St. 539-7686.)

SEUSSICAL
For all the whimsy of Theodor Geisel's doggerel, what's missing in this relentlessly cute musical by the team of Lynn Ahrens and Stephen Flaherty is mayhem and magic. With the exception of one gentle and winning performance—by Kevin Chamberlin as Horton the Elephant, who gets conned into hatching an egg—it's a show with curiously little charm. (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

STRICTLY PERSONAL
Jake Feinberg's comedy about post-divorce dating. (Soho Playhouse, 15 Vandam St., near Sixth Ave. 239-6200.)

THE SYRINGA TREE
A tour-de-force solo drama, written by and starring South African native and first-time playwright Pamela Gien, who gives an extraordinary performance in all twenty-three roles. It's a love story, really, about the strong, lasting bond between a white girl and her black nanny in South Africa, which begins in 1965 and continues through the following twenty years of turbulent and violent upheavals over apartheid. (Playhouse 91, at 316 E. 91st St. 307-4100.)

THE TALE OF THE ALLERGIST'S WIFE
Charles Busch's satire of New York intellectual angst, staged by Manhattan Theatre Club, has moved to Broadway. Linda Lavin, Tony Roberts, and Michele Lee star. Lynne Meadow is the director. (3/20/00) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

THEATRE OF LIGHT
A show by Rudi Stern, the "light artist" whose designs in the nineteen-sixties accompanied Timothy Leary's Psychedelic Celebrations and concerts by the Doors. (Flamboyan Theatre, Soto Velez Cultural Center, 107 Suffolk St., between Delancey and Rivington Sts. 279-4200.)

THREE SECONDS IN THE KEY
In her latest performance piece, Deb Margolin recounts her fight with Hodgkin's disease, which she and her son coped with by immersing themselves in professional basketball. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 477-5288.)

TIME AND AGAIN
Jack Finney's 1970 novel about a New Yorker who travels through time is the basis for a new musical by Walter Edgar Kennon (score) and Jack Viertel (book). Susan H. Schulman is the director. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes Feb. 18.)

DANCE

NEW YORK CITY BALLET
Feb. 14 at 8: "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "Romeo and Juliet," the première of "Burleske," choreographed by Peter Martins, and "Chaconne." ♦ Feb. 15 at 8: "Fanfare," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Brandenburg." ♦ Feb. 16 at 8: "Symphony in Three Movements," "Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ Feb. 17 at 2: A divertimento from "Le Baiser de la Fée," "Burleske," "Sonatas and Interludes," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ Feb. 17 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir," and "Chaconne." ♦ Feb. 18 at 3: "Symphony in Three Movements," "Stabat Mater," and "Brandenburg." ♦ Feb. 20 at 8: "Burleske," "La Valse," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ Feb. 21 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Tchaikovsky Pas de Deux," "Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir," and "Symphony in Three Movements." ♦ Feb. 22 at 8: "Chaconne," "Stabat Mater," and "Fearful Symmetries." ♦ Feb. 23 at 8: "Fanfare," "Variations pour une Porte et un Soupir," and "Chaconne." ♦ Feb. 24 at 2: "Burleske," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ Feb. 24 at 8: "Concerto Barocco," "Sonatas and Interludes," "Stabat Mater," and "Stars and Stripes." ♦ Feb. 25 at 3: "Walpurgisnacht Ballet," "Dances at a Gathering," and "Symphony in Three Movements." (New York State Theatre, Lincoln Center. 870-5570.)

MOMIX
For the last week of its twentieth-anniversary season, the company offers alternating programs of the new "Opus Cactus" and 1991's acclaimed "Passion." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Feb. 13-16 at 8, Feb. 17 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 18 at 2 and 7:30.)

TWYLA THARP DANCE
After a thirty-five-year career of schlepping from studio to studio, Twyla Tharp, the maverick of classical-cum-pop choreography, finally has a

POP NOTES

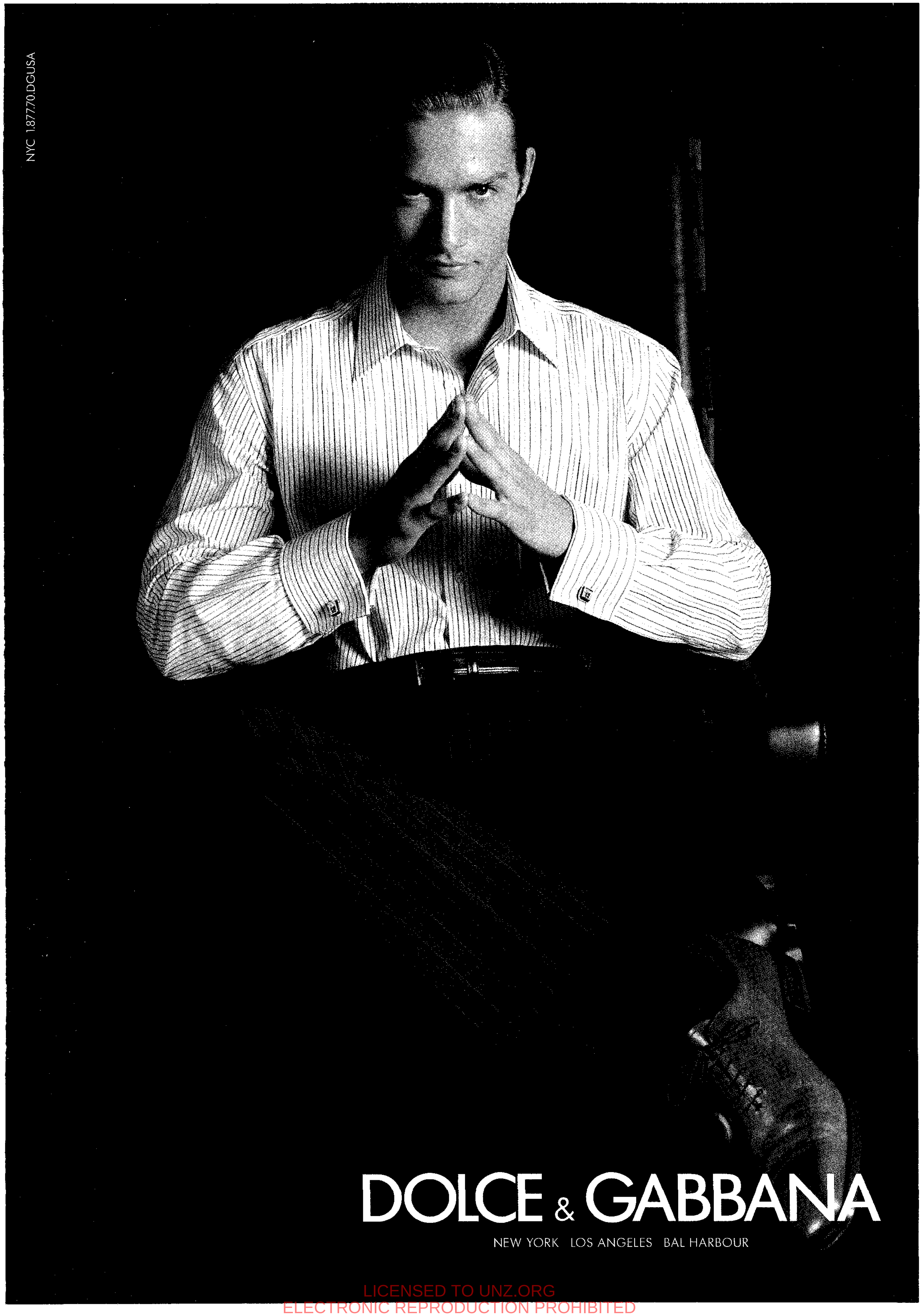
GOING HOME
In the beginning, rock and roll, R. & B., and blues were like members of the same family. Then rock moved out. In recent years, though, the genres have begun to renew their ties, thanks to a few musicians who are old enough and wise enough to bring it all back home.

Powerful and at times unbearably passionate, the voice of Etta James has turned songs into standards for four decades ("At Last," "I'd Rather Go Blind," "All I Could Do Was Cry"), and James shows no signs of slowing down. Her new disk, **"Matriarch of the Blues"** (Private Music), is a rousing album full of Etta-fied versions of classic rock songs from the sixties (Creedence Clearwater Revival's "Born on the Bayou") and seventies (Bob Dylan's "Gotta Serve Somebody," the Rolling Stones' "Miss You"). But the most convincing argument for James's enduring greatness comes from her funky, understated treatment of the Leiber and Stoller classic "Hound Dog" which goes back before Elvis, back to when Big Mama Thornton topped the charts with the song in 1953.

John Hammond, the son of the great talent scout who signed Aretha Franklin, Bruce Springsteen, and Bob Dylan, is an accomplished guitarist who has spent his career paying homage to such blues masters as Robert Johnson and Sleepy John Estes. Hammond's new album, **"Wicked Grin"** (Pointblank), is a concept record, and the concept is Tom Waits: all thirteen songs are drawn from the song bag of the gravel-voiced poet laureate of the down and out, who also produced the album. The result is one of the stronger entries in Hammond's catalogue; the up-tempo songs ("Get Behind the Mule," "Big Black Mariah") work especially well, and only the slowest ballads drag.

As a solo artist, the brilliantly idiosyncratic rock-and-roll guitarist Jeff Beck has been a source of frustration, seemingly more interested in restoring his collection of vintage automobiles than in practicing his fret-board pyrotechnics. **"You Had It Coming"** (Epic) finds Beck in typically volcanic form, spewing a lava of twisted notes and quirky feedback effects. The album's high point, oddly, is its lone vocal: the British singer Imogen Heap delivers a reading of the Muddy Waters standard "Rollin' and Tumblin'" over Beck's skittering guitar. The blues has never sounded as radically remade yet essentially unchanged.

—*Ben Greenman*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room of her own: sixty-five hundred square feet in Brooklyn's Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, where she can field a permanent company for the first time in twelve years. She ushers in this new era with two works, "Mozart Clarinet Quintet K. 581" and "Surfer at the River Styx." The latter, performed to Donald Knaack's terrifically rambunctious score for percussion, shows that Tharp hasn't relinquished her trademark virtuoso ballet steps executed with floppy insouciance. (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. Feb. 20-23 at 8, Feb. 24 at 2 and 8, and Feb. 25 at 2.)

"CARAVANE"
Urban Tap, a collective of dancers and musicians organized and inspired by the exceptionally quick-footed Herbin (Tamango) Van Cayseele, offers diverse entertainment by tappers, a capoeira specialist, a stilt stomper, and others, accompanied by music from African drummers, an Italian trumpeter, a rapper, and a d.j. (The New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 239-6200. Feb. 15-16 and Feb. 21-23 at 7, Feb. 17 and Feb. 24 at 2 and 7, and Feb. 18 and Feb. 25 at noon and 5.)

"BLACK DANCE: TRADITION AND TRANSFORMATION"
The annual festival of African-American dance, produced by 651 Arts. Feb. 15 at 8: Abdel R. Salaam's Forces of Nature in "Rhythm Legacy" and "Free to Dance." ♦ Feb. 16-17 at 8: The Bebe Miller Company in "Verge." ♦ Feb. 21 and 23 at 8: Salia nï Seydou, a contemporary-dance troupe from Burkina Faso, in "Taagalà." ♦ Feb. 22 and Feb. 24 at 8: The Ronald K. Brown/Evidence company in "High Life." (BAM's Harvey Theatre, 651 Fulton St., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100.)

"AUTO.PUBLIK"
The choreographer Mark Jarecke offers the first full-length dance work based on the social criticism of Jedediah Purdy. (Danspace Project, St. Mark's In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 674-8194. Feb. 15-17 at 8:30 and Feb. 18 at 7:30.)

"A HISTORY OF PRIVATE LIFE"
The seven-member Creach/Company, under the direction of Terry Creach, presents an expanded version of his year-old work, which uses video projections on translucent screens to give a sense of the increasingly porous boundaries between the public and private spheres. (Danspace Project. 674-8194. Feb. 22-25 at 8:30.)

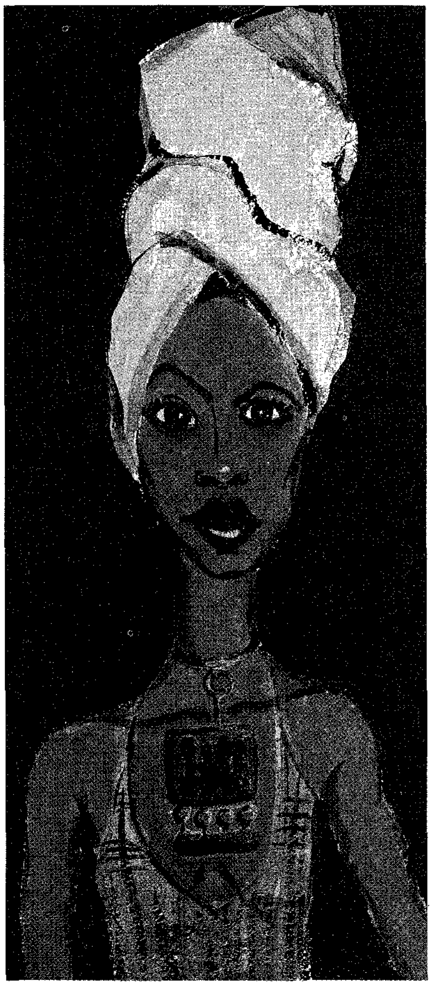
"JILL IN BRAZIL/THE ORCHID SHOW"
In Neta Pulvermacher's revised and expanded song-and-dance caper, the soap-opera star and orchid lover Jill St. John hosts a tony TV special on the exotic flower. Five engaging dancers, decked out in makeshift vinyl minis and fuzzy AstroTurf-green tops and hats, play the individual orchids. The hairy-legged Jeremy Laverdure, in a purple wig and a flowered fifties housedress, plays Jill. "When I was little, my mother asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up," she says, in a quavery voice somewhere between Audrey Hepburn and the Red Queen. "And I said I wanted to be a flower." Pulvermacher's entrancing history of the feverishly adored bloom has crossover appeal: it should be a big hit with postmodernists, drag queens, and children. (Flea Theatre, 41 White St. Feb. 17-18 and Feb. 24-25 at 3 and Feb. 19-23 at 1.)

MONTANA TRANSPORT CO.
The ten-member troupe, based in Missoula, Montana, comes east for its New York début, performing three works by choreographer Amy Ragsdale ("Just Passing Through," "Watching Over," and "Furniture") and two works by former Mo-Trans dancers Lindsay Gilmour and Kristin Tovson. (Merce Cunningham Studio, 55 Bethune St. 924-0077. Feb. 15-17 at 9.)

BROOKOFF DANCE REPERTORY COMPANY
The choreographer Matthew Brookoff offers seven works, including "Femme," "Let's Step Out," and "So in Love." (Merce Cunningham Studio. 340-7486. Feb. 22-24 at 9.)

"ROYAL MADNESS"
The collaborators Yasuko Yokoshi and Gonnie Heggen present an evening-length work that uses dance, dialogue, and video to examine the protocol of court life in imperial France and Japan. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Feb. 21-24 at 8.)

"FACE THE MUSIC AND DANCE"
This installment of the ongoing series pairing dancers and musicians features two collaborations: "So That You Could See Us Coming," by the dancer David Neumann and the composer Laurie Anderson; and "In the Name," by the choreographer Allyson Green and the composer Paul Dresher. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400. Feb. 22-24 at 8.)



Erykah Badu, at Radio City Music Hall.

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

"JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER"
The warm-voiced vocalist **Dianne Reeves**, whose new release, "The Calling," makes explicit her debt to Sarah Vaughan, gets the full production here, accompanied by strings in addition to a jazz ensemble. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. Feb. 14 at 8.) ♦ Two stalwart vocalists give a refresher course on the art of jazz singing. **Freddy Cole** has by now stepped out of his late brother Nat's shadow and come into his own as an authoritative stylist. / Although she's been around forever, **Mary Stallings** is still a relative unknown who deserves a wider audience. (Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, Lincoln Center. 721-6500. Feb. 22-24 at 8 and Feb. 25 at 6.)

ERYKAH BADU
Four years ago, Badu distinguished herself from the hordes of computer-driven R. & B. divas with a percolating, low-key hit single, "On & On," and a fantastic album, "Baduizm," which was full of her distinctive brand of wacky New Age spirituality tinged with sex-kitten languor. On her latest disk, "Mama's Gun," Badu flirts with edgy rock guitar, but on the balance her sound is as sweet and seductive as the center of a ripe fig. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. Feb. 14-15 at 8.)

GALACTIC
The hot and spicy funk of this New Orleans outfit is delivered by the charismatic vocalist Theryl (the Houseman) de Clouet. With Drums and Tuba, a highly infectious trio—tuba, drums, and guitar—that laces its loop-filled songs with Crescent City-style grooves and some progressive-rock guitar heroics. (Roseland, 239 W. 52nd St. 307-7171. Feb. 16 at 8.)

"70'S SOUL JAM"
The Stylistics, one of the greatest R. & B. bands of all time, host a party with the Dramatics and the Chi-Lites. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Feb. 16 at 7:30 and 11:30.)

ASTER AWEKE
A rare local appearance by Aweke, who's known as the Queen of Ethiopian Song. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. Feb. 17 at 8.)

"MASTERS OF PERSIAN MUSIC"
A concert that lives up to its name, featuring the Iranian vocalist Mohammad Reza Shajarian and his compatriot musicians Hossein Alizadeh (on lute), Kayhan Kalhor (on the *kamancheh,* or spiked fiddle), and Homayoun Shajarian (on the *tombak,* a percussion instrument). (Town Hall. Feb. 24 at 8.)

PAOLO CONTE
The suave Italian songsmith. (Beacon Theatre, Broadway at 74th St. 496-7070. Feb. 26 at 9.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
243 W. 42nd St. (997-4144)—Feb. 14: **Ashford & Simpson,** the Rodgers and Hart of Motown. Back in the late sixties, this husband-and-wife duo penned and produced such classics as "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and "Ain't Nothing Like the Real Thing." Feb. 16-17: **Nile Rodgers,** the world's greatest living rhythm guitarist and the songwriter for Chic, the sleek, late-seventies disco cabal that gave the world such seminal dance-floor candy as "Le Freak" and "Good Times." Feb. 18-19: The incendiary bluesman **Buddy Guy.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (533-2111)—Feb. 14: The Dayton-based lo-fi combo **Guided by Voices.** Feb. 16: At first, the smooth slide guitar, quiet piano, and occasional harmonica of **Mojave 3** call to mind country music. But on closer listening it's clear that this London-based band is more interested in the tender sentiments of pop than in the regret and grit of Johnny Cash's world. Surely this sweetness comes from Mojave's leader, Neil Halstead, who, unlike his bandmates, lives in the seaside town of Newquay, Cornwall, the surfing capital of England. What could be more romantic than riding waves in the cold Atlantic in the U.K.? Feb. 17: The Duluth trio **Low** specializes in high-impact emotion without histrionics (a guitar solo is usually just a methodically strummed single note).

CHICAGO B.L.U.E.S.
73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—Feb. 24: The **Holmes Brothers.** In their more than twenty-five years in the business, the group has spent its time well, perfecting a mix of blues, soul, gospel, R. & B., and country which puts them head and shoulders above most younger acts. Their latest album, "Speaking in Tongues," has a distinct gospel tinge, thanks in part to its producer, Joan Osborne, who met the Brothers long before she became a one-hit wonder. She followed them when they were the hosts of jam sessions at Dan Lynch's, the since-closed Second Avenue blues bar. Osborne has described those sessions as being "like a cross between a Pentecostal church meeting and a Mississippi roadhouse," and she's gone for the same feeling on the new record.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—Feb. 16: Like many English bands of late, **Coldplay** has received heaps of critical acclaim for its fuzzy guitars and

ELIZA GRAN

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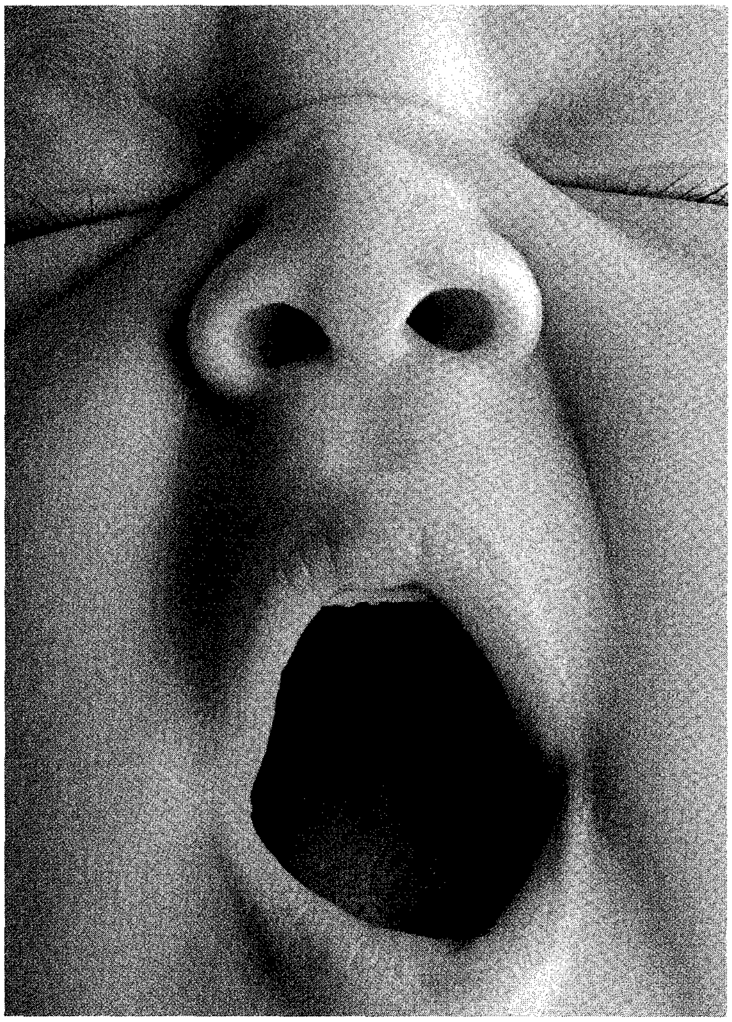

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accessible, emotional pop, but one thing sets this London-based quartet apart from such lauded peers as Travis, Robbie Williams, and the Stereophonics—Coldplay is selling records in America. Its début release, the utterly appealing "Parachutes," is currently at No. 61 on the Billboard 200 chart.

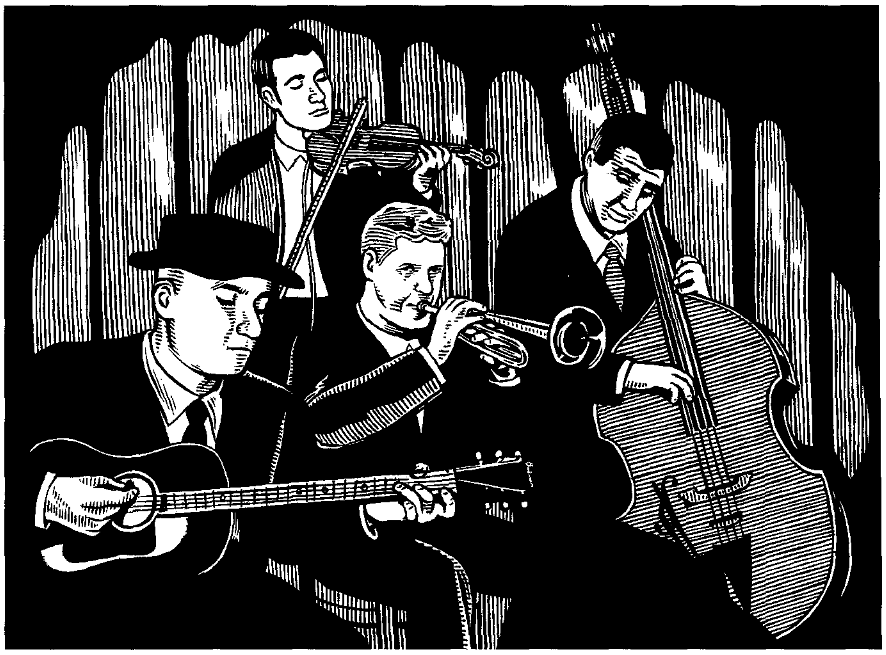
KNITTING FACTORY
74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Feb. 24: **Death Cab for Cutie,** a quartet from Bellingham, Washington, which grew out of the singer and guitarist Benjamin Gibbard's solo project, All Time Quarterback. Its latest EP, the beautifully melancholic "Forbidden Love," is full of flawless pop melodies and weightless vocals that float above the sway of reverberating drums, guitars, and string arrangements.

MAXWELL'S
1039 Washington St., Hoboken (201-798-0406)—Feb. 16: **Low** (see the Bowery Ballroom). Feb. 17: **Mojave 3** (see the Bowery Ballroom). Feb. 18: **Kristin Hersh,** a graduate of the postmodern girl group Throwing Muses, stops by with her spare, atmospheric songcraft. With the front-porch ballads and lilting, whimsical waltzes of **Clem Snide.**

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—Feb. 14: **Syd Straw,** the gifted vocalist who first made her name with the Golden Palominos, offers a Valentine's Day concert. Feb. 17: **Babe the Blue Ox,** a coed Brooklyn-based trio that sounds like a quirky cross between Primus and King Crimson.

TONIC
107 Norfolk St. (358-7503)—Feb. 16: **Big Lazy,** the elegantly gritty instrumental trio led by the extraordinary guitarist Stephen Ulrich, stops by for a midnight show. Feb. 25: Brooklyn's **Barbez** binds together *musette*, tango, punk, and klezmer to create Brecht-flecked café rock for sophisticated audiences. A small, potent Russian singer and an exquisite violin (along with the occasional guest cellist and a dancer) add to the dramatic resonance. It's a multilingual, multinational pleasure guaranteed to satisfy your cultural wanderlust.

VILLAGE UNDERGROUND
130 W. 3rd St. (777-7745)—Feb. 16-17: Buddy Guy (see the B. B. King Blues Club & Grill, above) may be a better-known singer, but **Otis Rush** has been nipping at his ankles for more than four decades. Rush is nothing if not intense: his phrasing stings with a lyricism just this side of murderous, and his pledge "I've been wronged, but I won't be wronged again" is just as chilling. Feb. 24: **C. J. Chenier,** son of the legendary zydeco accordionist Clifton Chenier, upholds the traditions of that Creole dance music.


The Howard Fishman quartet leaves Brooklyn for a run of Sundays at Joe's Pub.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

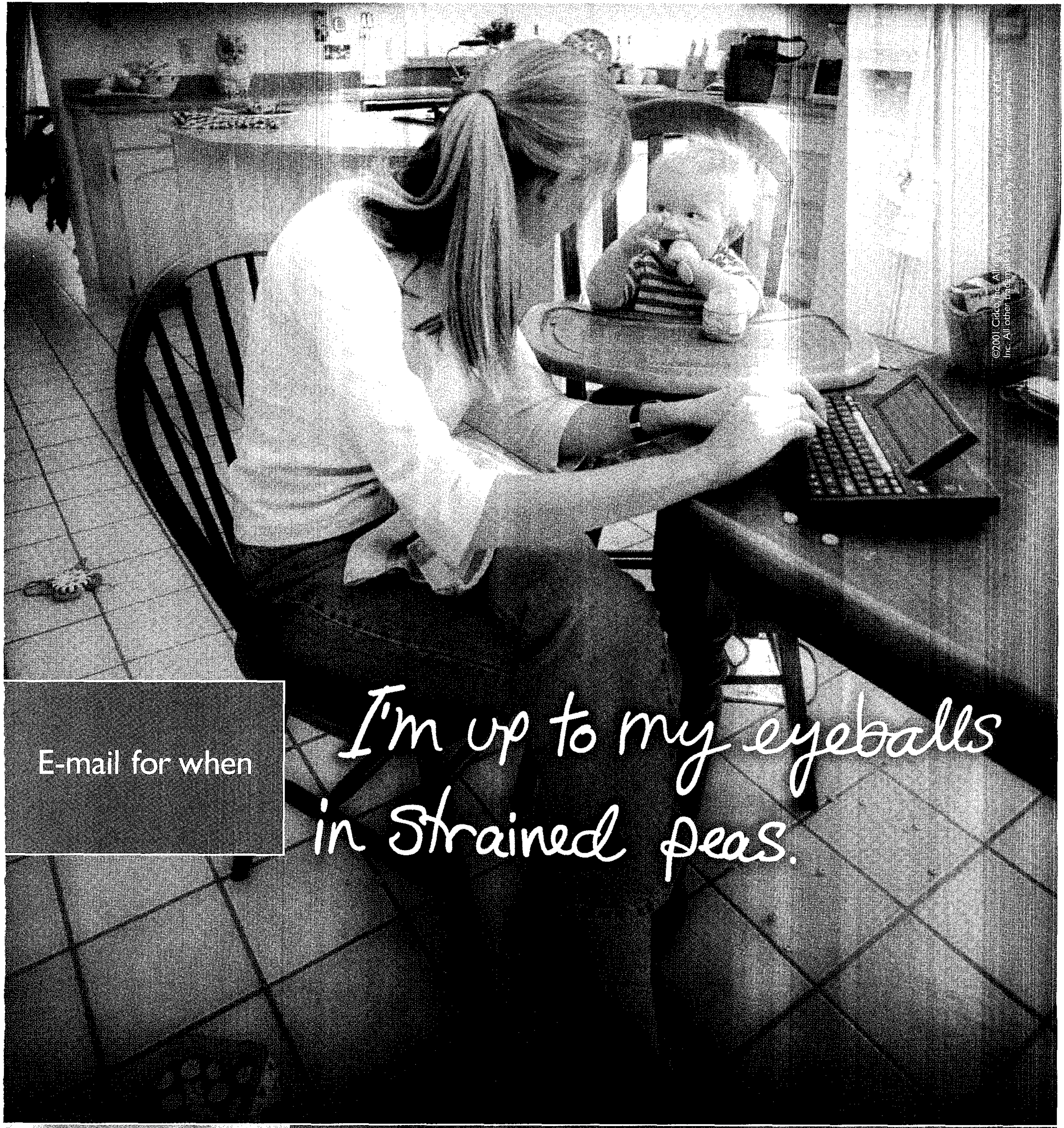
BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (581-3080)—Feb. 16-17: Nobody gets to the still point of a ballad more quickly than **Chris Connor,** who is fondly remembered from her days with Stan Kenton. Feb. 22-24: The bittersweet excellence of romantic pop-and-jazz vocalist **Kenny Rankin.** Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—The **Count Basie Orchestra,** under the direction of Grover Mitchell, has the floor through Feb. 18. The funky sounds of the Hammond organ are in force the week of Feb. 20-25 as the bands of **Jimmy Smith** and **Lou Donaldson** hold court. Smith, the stylistic innovator behind the electric keyboard, is an iffy proposition these days, prone to giving his sidemen far too much time in the spotlight. The alto saxophonist Donaldson, on the other hand, is a sure thing, a brilliant bop player who isn't afraid to get down and dirty with help from his marvellous organ player, **Dr. Lonnie Smith.**

CARLYLE HOTEL
Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and **Mary Cleere Haran,** who has long been the witty apotheosis of cabaret singers. Her run here has been extended through March 17. ♦ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, **Peter Mintun** is in attendance.

IRIDIUM
48 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Through Feb. 18: The **Ron Carter** quintet. The world's most famous jazz bassist has developed the kind of single-minded rapport with the pianist **Stephen Scott** which Carter once had with Herbie Hancock when they played together with Miles Davis, albeit with far less fevered intensity than that fabled relationship. Feb. 20-25: The **Benny Green** trio. Green has shaken a nasty case of the funkies—that insidious affliction that makes pianists play rote blues lines that were old when Ray Charles was using them—and has blossomed into a top-drawer mainstream stylist.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (576-2232)—Through Feb. 18: The **Donald Harrison** quartet. Harrison's days as a straitlaced neoconservative are long over. The New Orleans-born jazz saxophonist is now happy mixing and matching jazz with Mardi Gras Indian chants, Meters-style funk, and contemporary hip-hop. But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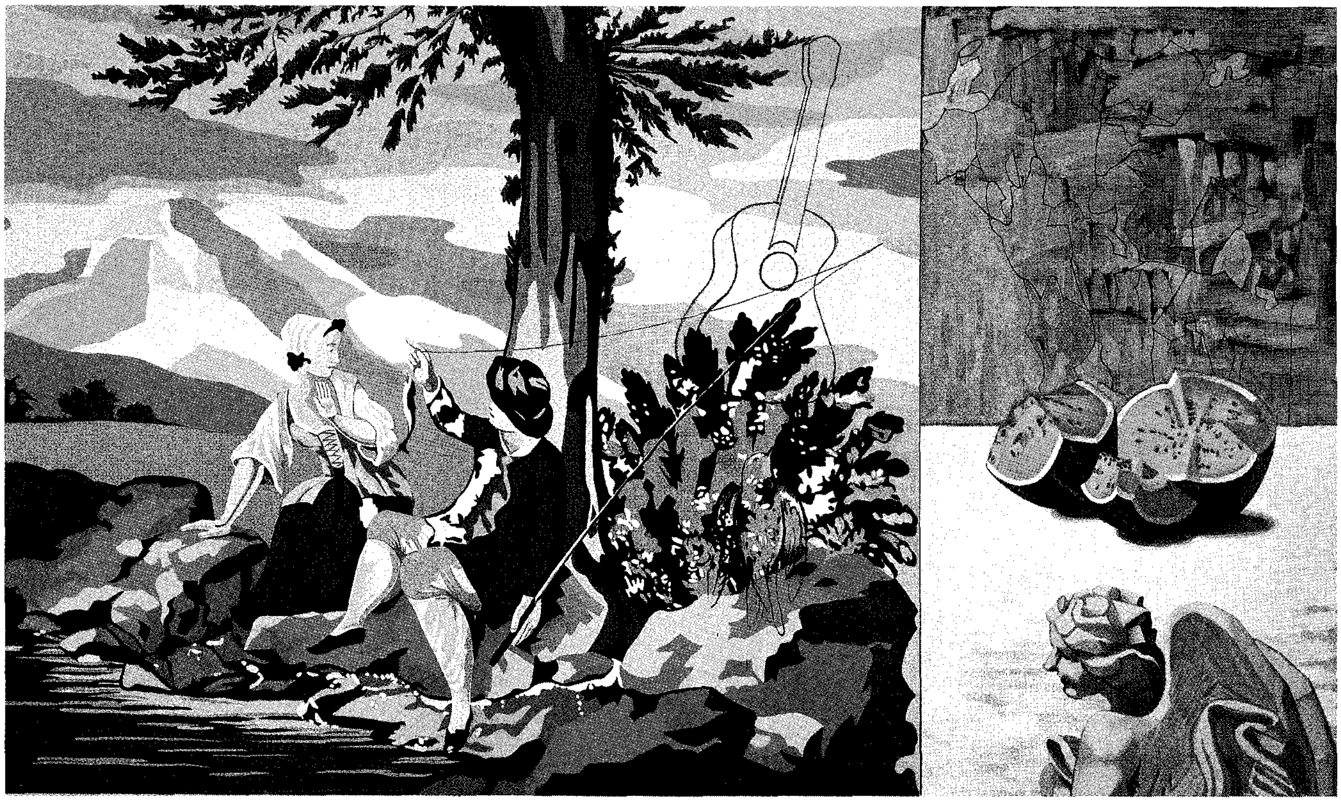

EIGHTIES RETRO *David Salle's handsome new paintings at Gagosian toy with a nicely nasty rococo idyll—bold boy dangles hooked fish at coy girl by mountain lake. His familiar repertoire of diptych composition, small insets, and overlay drawing does stalwart service, but the imagery—angels, origami birds, still-lifes of fruit—is unexciting. So is the mix of appropriated styles that range from paint-by-numbers pert to Jasper Johns lugubrious. The sonorous orchestrations of unusual colors would be impressive if they seemed to be about anything. Salle—whose brilliant work in the early eighties is underrated today—here suggests a jazz great reduced to playing Muzak. That his talent still shines doesn't make the results more heartening.—Peter Schjeldahl*

when the mood strikes, he can still race a bebop tune into a sweat. Feb. 20-25: The **Steve Lacy** trio. Dining.

JOE'S PUB

425 Lafayette St. (539-8777)—Feb. 18 and Feb. 25: The **Howard Fishman** quartet settles in on Sundays through the end of the month. The guitarist and singer Fishman is hardly your typical cabaret performer: he can be found in such diverse locales as the Oak Room, Sardi's, and Pete's Candy Store, a neighborhood bar in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. And his sound follows suit: while not exactly Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grappelli reincarnated, Fishman and his violinist, Russell Farhang (along with the bassist Jonathan Flaugher and the trumpeter Erik Jekabson), spin out the freshest small-group swing in the city. The band is here to celebrate the release of its latest CD, "I Like You a Lot," an affecting and haunting collection of cunning originals.

KNITTING FACTORY

74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—Feb. 15-17: The brilliant saxophonist and clarinettist **Marty Ehrlich** stops by with his ensemble Traveler's Tales. Keeping things lean, this outfit pairs the leader with the rising-star saxophonist **Tony Malaby,** the bassist **Jerome Harris,** and the drummer **Bobby Previte,** a player whose telepathic rapport with Ehrlich, developed over twenty years of collaboration, is a joy to hear. Feb. 25: The pianist **Uri Caine,** who loves linking classical music and jazz in wholly fresh, often outrageously creative ways, presents his "Mahler Project" and his Goldberg Variations.

UP OVER JAZZ CAFÉ

351 Flatbush Ave., at Seventh Ave., Brooklyn (718-398-5413)—Having come through on the substantial promise he showed with, among many others, Leon Parker and Chick Corea, the poised alto saxophonist and flute player **Steve Wilson** (here with his quartet on Feb. 16-17) has elbowed past trustworthy-sideman status straight into the big leagues. Feb. 23-24: The **Arturo O'Farrill** trio.

VILLAGE VANGUARD

178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—Through Feb. 18: **Dave Douglas,** one of the most adventurous new-jazz trumpeters, composers, and bandleaders on the scene today, started out as a bop player, and the pleasures of that idiom are still very much in evidence in his playing. Don't expect anything retro from his quintet—a steaming unit stocked with topnotch players including the saxophonist **Chris Potter** and the pianist **Uri Caine**—but don't be surprised if you sense the ghosts of Dizzy, Clifford, and Miles occasionally slinking out of the leader's horn. Feb. 20-25: He's got the name, the technique, the band, and the aura, but something still doesn't add up when it comes to the saxophonist **Branford Marsalis.** There's plenty going on in his improvisations, but they leave you feeling as if you've only been shown a photograph of a banquet rather than actually feasting at one. You get your money's worth when it comes to onstage activity—the notes fly relentlessly from all involved—but you might find yourself aching for a lot less blinding fury and a little more heart. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (879-5500)—**"Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Chinese Painting"** is an intermittently dazzling show, drawn entirely from the vast collection that Robert H. Ellsworth donated to the museum in 1986. Though artists in this period generally had some training in Western techniques, only *guohua* (works in traditional Chinese ink media) are on view. Of the thirty-five prominent artists represented, one towers above the others: Qi Baishi (1864-1957), a former cowherd who took up painting at the age of twenty-seven. One ravishing series by Qi, more than a dozen studies of frogs, catfish, and shrimp, was executed in spongy, aqueous grays. Even better is a narrow hanging scroll that shows a water buffalo, seen from behind. The creature's rump makes a perfect calligraphic circle, from which his tail hangs limply, echoing the long, bare branches of a willow tree. Qi's casual, comical perfection would have made both Thurber and Corot envious. Through Aug. 19. ♦ **"Rain of the Moon: Silver in Ancient Peru."** Through April 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Janine Antoni, Shahzia Sikander, and Kara Walker close out MOMA's millennial series of cloth-banner commissions, with three pieces hanging just outside the museum's front door. Walker's "Miss Obedience," the only one immediately recognizable as art, shows a white figure, the distinctly Walkeresque, African-featured Miss of the title, breaking a shackle and her arm to tumble through rabbit-hole-like black space toward the sidewalk. Sikander's "Maligned Monsters" features a Hindu deity and a Greek statue of a woman, which, with the title text, appear to bill a revisionist show of Indian and classical Western art. Antoni's "Mom" is even more disguised—she asked the museum for one of its own distinctive banners and removed the final "A." Through March 13. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, and Thursdays, 10:30 to 5:45; Fridays, 10:30 to 8:15.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (423-3500)—The latest collaboration between the impishness of Frank Gehry and the grandiosity of Thomas Krens is on view in the form of a proposal for a new Guggenheim museum, a sort of Bilbao 2, to be built just below the South Street Seaport, in Manhattan. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 9 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 9 to 8.)

WHAT DO A SINGER, A CONDUCTOR AND
AN ARTISTIC DIRECTOR HAVE IN COMMON?

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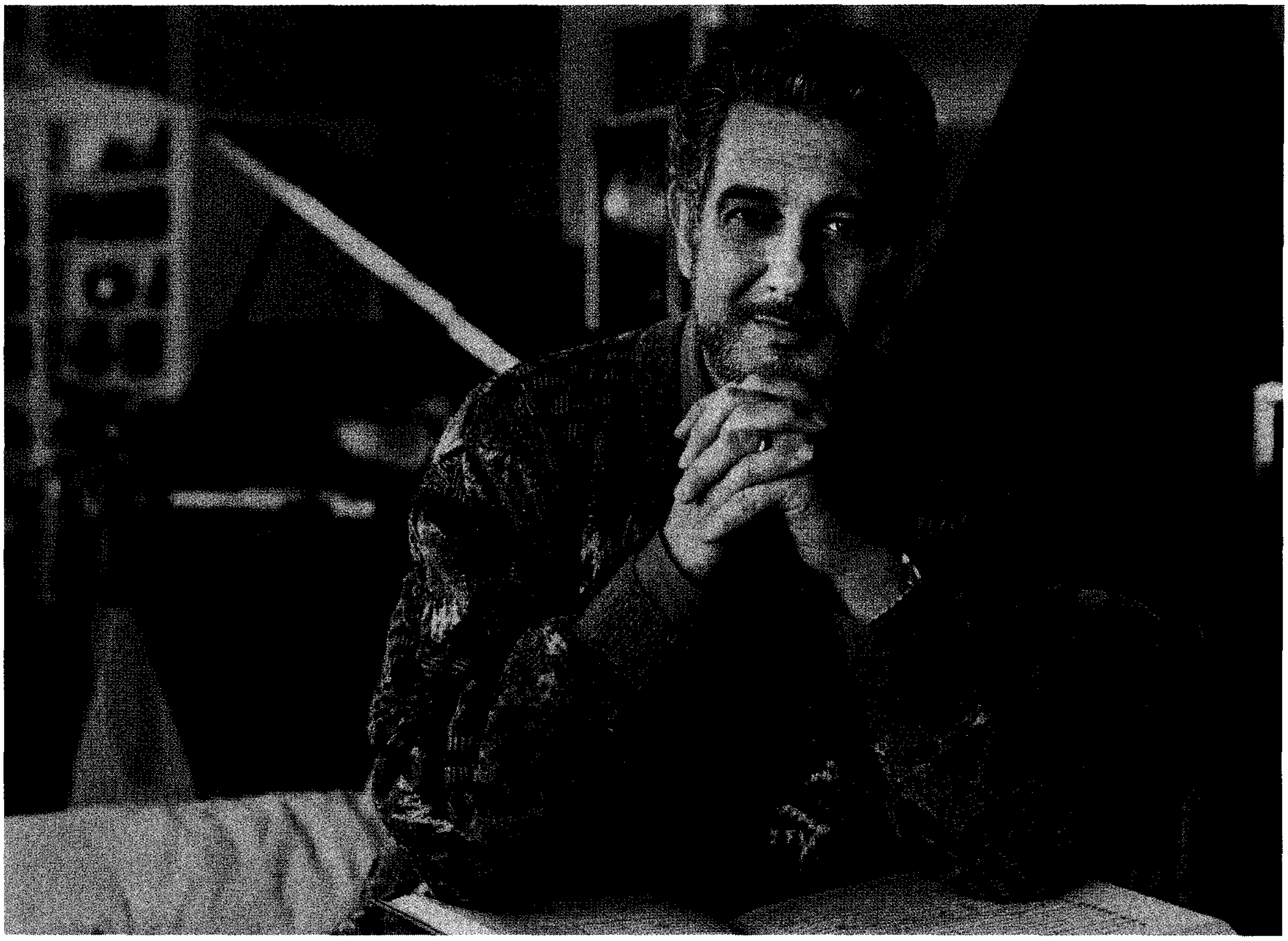

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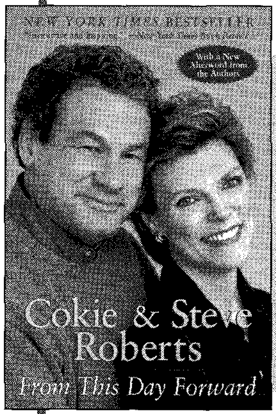
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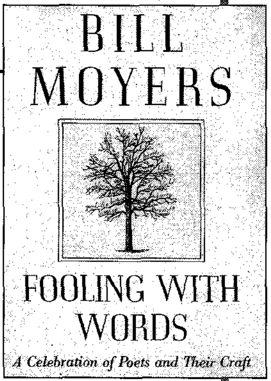

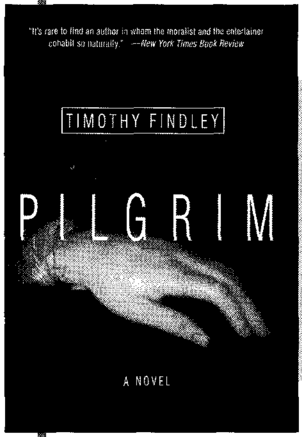

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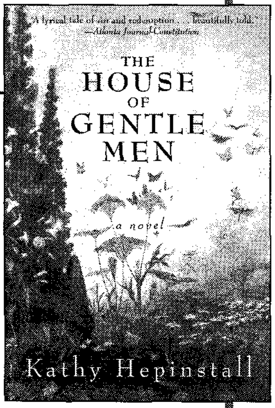

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TABLES FOR TWO

FLEUR DE SEL
5 E. 20th St. (460-9100)—Cyril Renaud, the chef-owner of this plain-looking four-month-old café in the Flatiron district, won't be insulted if you heap salt on his food. In fact, he wants you to: at each table he's placed little wooden shovels in bowls of the artisanal sea salt *fleur de sel*, which is harvested near his home town, in Brittany. The "flower of salt" is swept from the evaporating surfaces of briny marshes on hot, breezy days, which captures oceanic flavor without the heavy dose of saline; the seasoning develops the flavors of the food, and it's even good eaten straight. It could be the New York restaurant world's new white truffle.

Fleur de Sel is one of a new breed of intimate spots around town where pedigreed chefs turn their backs on spectacle and crowds to stay behind the stoves. Renaud's prix-fixe menu is challenging but never showy; his combinations transform simple flavors into something luxurious. Parsnip soup with chestnut ravioli is well rounded, with a little kick from white-truffle oil. Rose water keeps a dried-fruit purée from becoming too sweet as a bath for the seared-foie-gras appetizer. Astoundingly tender whole beef cheeks in a Pinot Noir sauce (it turns out they're marinated in the hot wine for three days) are bolstered by rustic kamut, an Egyptian grain. Pigeon (raised upstate, it's announced, lest diners confuse the fowl with its city cousin) is served in salmis sauce, a pungent concoction made from the bird's heart, liver, and brain.

The exposed-brick room relies entirely on a suite of Renaud's own modest oil paintings, chunkily rendered flowers, bottles, and village scenes with Post-Impressionist looks and Ludwig Bemelmans charm. (Renaud taught himself to paint a year ago, after he left his position as executive chef at La Caravelle.) From across the room they add color to a pleasantly forgettable ambience—the food is the only thing meant to attract attention.

For dessert, there's a flashy white-chocolate-and-caramel ganache with a regiment of fine raspberries, but the apple crêpe, a Breton classic Renaud makes the hard way (caramelizing it and flipping it three times) is clearly closer to his heart. He probably had an army cooking the desserts at his last post, but at a recent lunch he delivered a late crêpe himself, explaining that he'd burned the first one a bit and had decided to start all over. (Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, weekends for dinner only. Prix fixe, $30 for lunch, $52 for dinner.)

—*Owen Phillips*

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (570-3676)—A retrospective devoted to the work of Sol LeWitt, the Tom Sawyerish Conceptualist who gets assistants to execute his ideas, includes a zigguratlike sculpture, wall paintings, books, works on paper, and photographs. Through Feb. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays and weekends, 11 to 6, Fridays 1 to 9.)

MORGAN LIBRARY
29 E. 36th St. (685-0008)—What do you call a roller-coaster ride that lasts five centuries? The reputation of Jean Poyet. In his lifetime (somewhere near the end of the fifteenth century), the French illuminator was a star of three successive royal courts. In the seventeenth century, he was forgotten. In the nineteenth, he was rediscovered—only to have his work reattributed to his greatest rival, Jean Bourdichon. Recently, Poyet has staged another comeback, culminating in this lovely exhibition, whose highlights lie in the pages from his "Hours of Henry VIII," full of brightly costumed figures wandering through idyllic landscapes. Little is known about Poyet's life. He remains (like his great predecessor Jean Fouquet) an early practitioner of the smooth,

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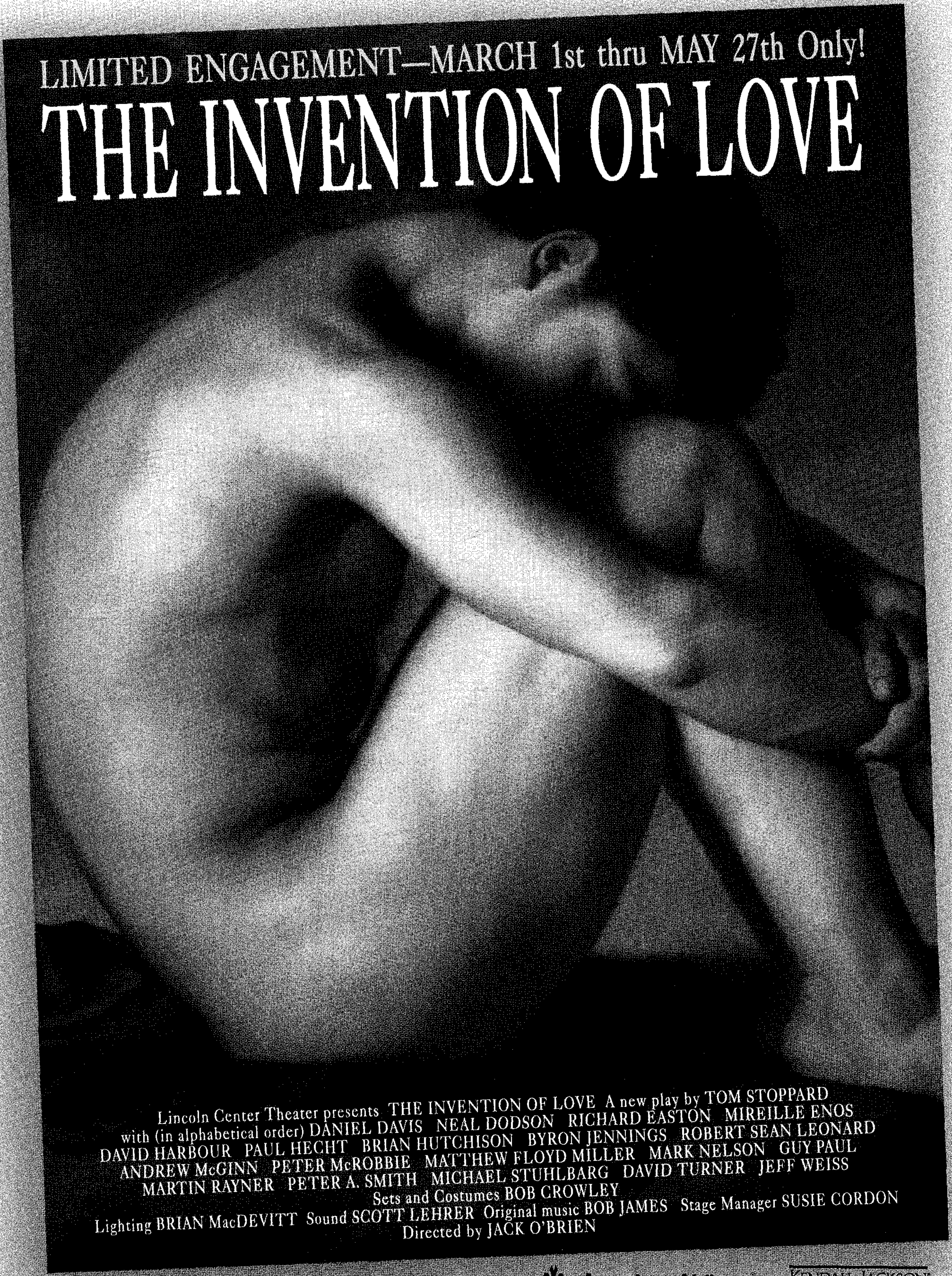

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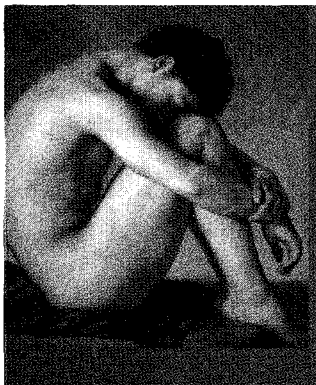

"STOPPARD AT HIS BEST. Spellbinding and amazing. A heady mixture of the learned and the entertaining." - The London Times

Tom Stoppard has always delighted theatergoers with dazzling wordplay and intellectual rigor, but as *Arcadia, The Real Thing* and *Shakespeare in Love* attest, his writing very much touches the heart.

The Invention of Love is a truly affecting love story, a dream landscape on the life and afterlife of one of England's favorite poets A.E. Housman. The play moves back and forth across time exploring Housman's love of classical scholarship and his unrequited love for a male classmate.

Director Jack O'Brien (*The Full Monty, Pride's Crossing*) and designer Bob Crowley, (*Carousel, Twelfth Night, Aida*) who collaborated so successfully a few years ago on Lincoln Center Theater's production of Stoppard's *Hapgood*, are teamed again for *The Invention of Love* on Broadway.

"THE MOST EMOTIONALLY POWERFUL AND ENTHRALLING PLAY OF STOPPARD'S CAREER."

- Evening Standard

"A new Stoppard play always arrives with great expectations attached and THE INVENTION OF LOVE lives up to its expectations."

- Time Magazine (International)

"THE SHEER RICHNESS OF STOPPARD'S DRAMATIC IMAGINATION LEAVES YOU GASPING." - Daily Telegraph

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Italo-Flemish look that French artists came to favor. Through May 6. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10:30 to 5; Fridays, 10:30 to 8; Saturdays, 10:30 to 6; Sundays, noon to 6.)

GALLERIES–UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

NELL BLAINE
Should Blaine have remained an abstract painter? In her twenties, the precocious Virginia-born artist (1922-96) was one of abstraction's brightest stars. Then she changed course in the early fifties and spent the rest of her career making sunny landscapes and interiors. Collected half a century later, Blaine's abstractions look startlingly good. Lustrous jigsaw shapes bump and jostle around the rectangle. Elegance looms, but doesn't settle. Echoes of Mondrian and Stuart Davis abound, but Blaine (like Gorky before her) seems to be in the process of digesting, not just rehashing her influences. It's hard not to feel a certain wistfulness about what might have been. Through March 10. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 262-5050.)

KATHERINE BOWLING
Landscape painting that flirts with abstraction, using a formula cadged from frescoes—oil on spackle on plywood. The resulting matte surfaces are laboriously sanded and distressed, as if to emphasize their artifice. (Bowling's subject, she reminds us, is the nature of painting, not nature itself). Her bag of tricks is used to best effect in a series of seascape diptychs where the horizon line coincides with the seam between the two panels. In one, a smattering of sea spray in the form of minuscule white drips pays homage to Pollock, process art, and Winslow Homer in one swoop. Through Feb. 24. (Helman, 20 W. 57th St. 245-2888.)

JOAN WITEK
Though she continues to use only the color black, Witek's latest canvases have come a long way from the take-it-or-leave-it asceticism of her early work. Now she fills each rectangle with a tightly coiled pattern of meandering ideographic lines. The narrow unpainted intervals between them glow with a surprising luminosity; the effect is atmospheric and also pleasantly eye-dazzling. At first glance, Witek's new pictures suggest a block-print version of early Frank Stella. They might also serve as a perversely funereal tribute to the peppy, colorful Pattern and Decoration movement. Through Feb. 20. (CDS, 76 E. 79th St. 772-9555.)

Short List

WENDY MARK
Bookstein, 50 E. 78th St. 439-8605.
Through March 24.

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER
Davis & Langdale, 231 W. 60th St. 838-0333.
Through March 3.

GALLERIES–CHELSEA

MICHAEL BEVILACQUA
Bevilacqua grew up in California, painting and modifying racecars with a neighbor's hot-rod-crazy family. His huge canvases, decorated with layers of meticulously stenciled logos and sampled forms, have long used racing-stripe craftsmanship to reflect the artist's life. The new works are still packed full of music and fashion allusions—they could easily serve as a youth-culture quiz. But they're getting greener, more wistfully idyllic; after two kids, Bevilacqua now has his alter ego in the paintings, a figure borrowed from Matthew Barney's "Drawing Restraint 7," opening his mouth to roll out a driveway that leads to a lawn where a big rubber ball waits in the grass. Through March 17. (Fredericks, 504 W. 22nd St. 633-6555.)

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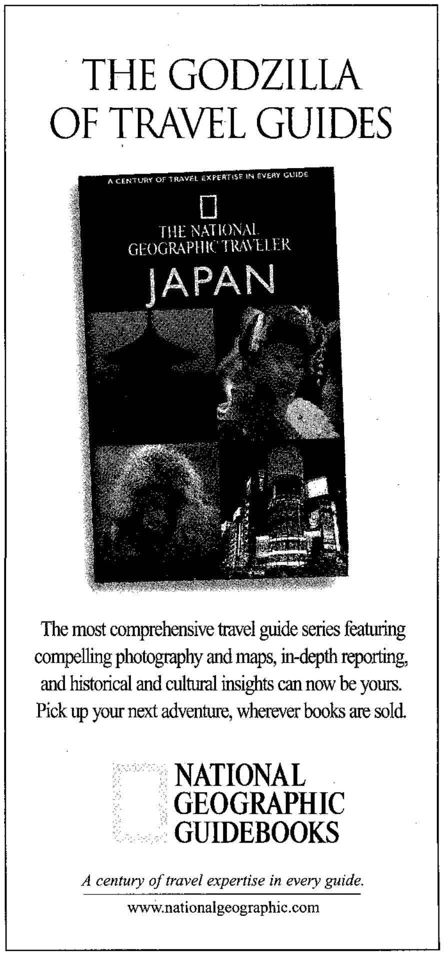
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Short List

NINA KATCHADOURIAN
Debs, 525 W. 26th St. 643-2070.
Through Feb. 24.
DAVID SALLE
Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 741-1111.
Through March 3.
ALEXI WORTH
Harris, 529 W. 20th St. 463-9666.
Through March 10.

GALLERIES-DOWNTOWN

GREG COLSON
The artist offers works in an ingenious subcategory of the tondo: the pie chart. In "Qualms About the Web," for example, there are slices for "security risk," "cold and impersonal, expensive to use, overhyped," and a slim wedge representing reservations about adult Web sites (the accompanying logo is a triple X). Other subjects that come in for parody include shapes observed by U.F.O. spotters, the musical instruments Americans play (mostly piano and guitar, but there are slivers for organ and drums), and "The Waste Stream" (mostly recyclables). You'd think that somebody who'd stumbled on such a rich vein of mockery wouldn't stop to fiddle with anything else, but Colson has thrown in some backup projects in other media anyway, like his series of street signs—indicating hopelessly tangled intersections. Through Feb. 24. (Sperone Westwater, 121 Greene St. 431-3685.)

TOM SACHS
"Lamps, Bitch Lounge, and Quarterscrews" shows almost exactly what it advertises—except that there's only one "quarterscrew," a Phillips-head drill bit welded to a coin to make a pocket-size screwdriver. The lamps display the same instinct for bricolage—in one, a gooseneck fixture is screwed into a phone book that's wrapped in duct tape; in another a softer light is attached to the head of a graffiti-marked parking meter. "Bitch Lounge," the prototype for an edition of white leather chairs on chrome frames, is a streamlined seat slung about an inch from the floor. The rest of the gallery is devoted to a permanent, rotating display of fine-art housewares from the likes of Chuck Close, Donald Judd, Kiki Smith, and Rachel Whiteread. Through March 3. (A/D, 560 Broadway. 966-5154.)

"FIGSTRACT EXPLOSIONISM"
This loopy show highlights a psychedelic strain of biomorphic abstraction. The most gloriously absurd piece is Peter Soriano's resin sculpture, "Orange Transport," a bulging, tomato-colored blob covered with milk-white handles and hanging from a nylon strap. It's a messenger bag for a Martian. Over the course of the show, hair emerges as a curious subtheme, cropping up as cornrows in Nancy Diamond's grisaille paintings and, in a drawing by Barbara Takenaga, as confectionary whorls that seem to be equal parts hair ball and bonbon. Through Feb. 17. (Bridgewater/Lustberg, 560 Broadway. 941-6355.)

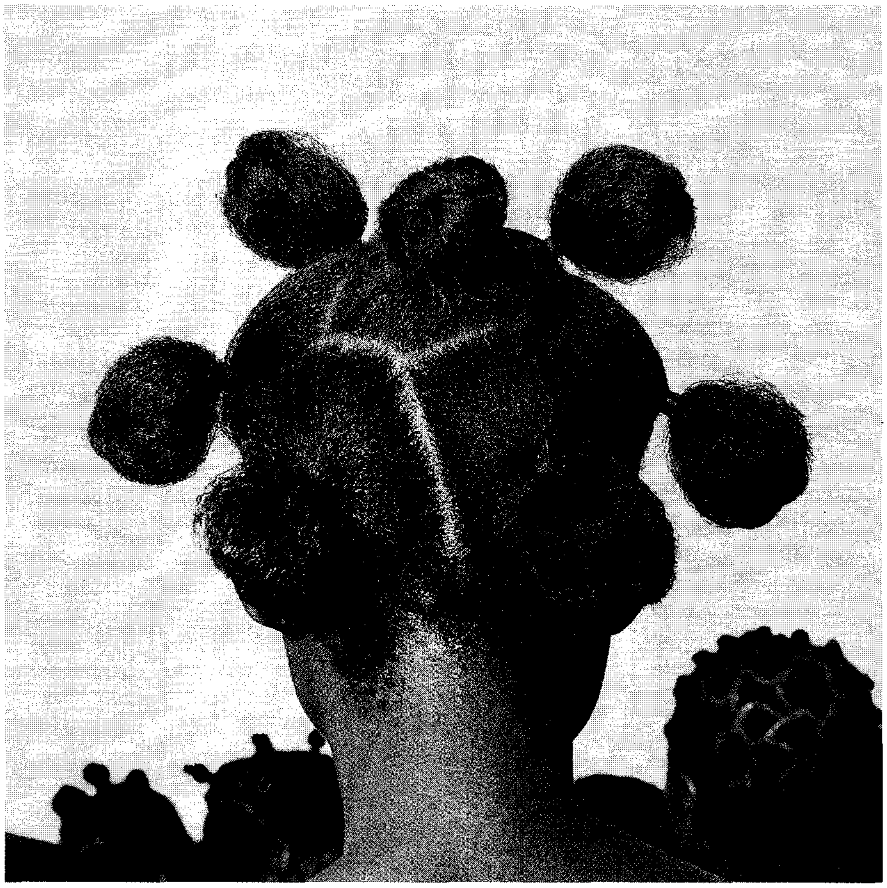
"REALLY"
Reality may be a novelty to network TV, but real life as the subject of art is old hat. Artist's Space revisits the familiar subject in an uneven show devoted to young artists who work in the gap between fact and fiction. Frank Benson's rambling video monologue is an apparently candid recap of his summer vacation—a narrative hybrid of "Traffic" and "The Real World"—involving encounters with drug runners, puppy love, and a questionable Picasso. The Dutch artist Cees Krijnen transforms his parents' bitter divorce into fodder for art; funds from a recent prize were spent on legal fees and a redesign of his mother's heating system, one of the last traces of his father left in her house. Through March 17. (38 Greene St. 226-3970.)

Short List

KUTLUG ATAMAN
Lehmann Maupin, 39 Greene St. 965-0753.
Through Feb. 24.
DENNIS OPPENHEIM
Ace, 275 Hudson St. 255-5599. Through Feb. 28.

AUCTIONS & ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Feb. 14-15: The final two days of a three-day auction devoted to decorative arts. ♦ Feb. 21: Timepieces of all kinds, including work by Breguet, Cartier, and Piguet. Among the most interesting lots are a walnut-and-gilt-brass pillar barometer in the eighteenth-century manner of the Englishman Daniel Quare and an unusual pink-gold, dual-crown, world-time wristwatch from Patek Philippe, estimated to sell for at least half a million dollars. ♦ Feb. 23: Impressionist and modern paintings, drawings, and sculptures, including an impressive body of work (by Picasso, Moore, Man Ray, and others) from the Galerie Dominion in Montréal. ♦ (York Ave. at 71st St. 606-7000.)



J. D. 'Okhai Ojeikere's "Mkpuk Eba," at Scalo (see Photography).

CHRISTIE'S
Feb. 15: Books, furniture, paintings, and jewelry from the family of Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt. ♦ Feb. 23: A sale of fine wine. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

DOYLE
Feb. 21: A general estates auction of American, English, and Continental furniture and decorations. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730.)

SWANN
Feb. 15: African-Americana, in prints and manuscripts, including items related to Frederick Douglass as well as Scott Joplin and other great black musicians, and a copy of the last book written by Martin Luther King, Jr., inscribed to Leonard Bernstein. ♦ Feb. 20: Photographs from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including work by Weegee and a large group of images related to the Civil War. (104 E. 25th St. 254-4710.)

GRAMERCY PARK ANTIQUES SHOW
A wide range of antiques and fine-arts items from a hundred dealers, designed to entice the young but well-heeled collector. (69th Regiment Armory, Lexington Ave. at 25th St. 532-0490. Feb. 16-18.)

"THE ART SHOW"
Seventy American dealers exhibit paintings, sculpture, drawings, prints, and photographs at the thirteenth annual show; all ticket sales will benefit the Henry Street Settlement. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 66th St. 940-8590. Feb. 22-26.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

THOMAS DEMAND
Demand's virtual-reality-like images are the result of a long artistic process in conventional media—he starts with colored cardboard, builds life-size dioramas, and then photographs them with a large-format camera. The generic-looking spaces have titles as literal as "Escalator" and as loaded as "Labor," but Demand is rebuilding history. His 1996 "Zimmer" replicates the hotel room in which L. Ron Hubbard wrote "Dianetics," while "Corner" refers to the Harvard dorm where Bill Gates coded some of his first software. Through April 7. (303 Gallery, 525 W. 22nd St. 255-1121.)

MIKE DISFARMER
During a midlife crisis that transformed him into a photographer, Mike Meyers (1884-1959) changed his last name to Disfarmer, set up a small studio, and began to document the citizens of his native Heber Springs, Arkansas. These portraits, of subjects standing against a neutral backdrop, emphasize the subtle statement made by the tilt of a cap or the way a sleeve is rolled. The result is a fusion of Irving Penn-like elegance and "Grapes of Wrath" realism. Through March 3. (Gallery 292, at 120 Wooster St. 431-0292.)

IZIMA KAORU
For this series, Izima's American gallery début, he asked female models how and where they might want to die. Their answers, depicted in suites of three or four prints per scenario, range from a tumble off a balcony to a mysterious murder in a field of sunflowers. The latter, the most gruesome

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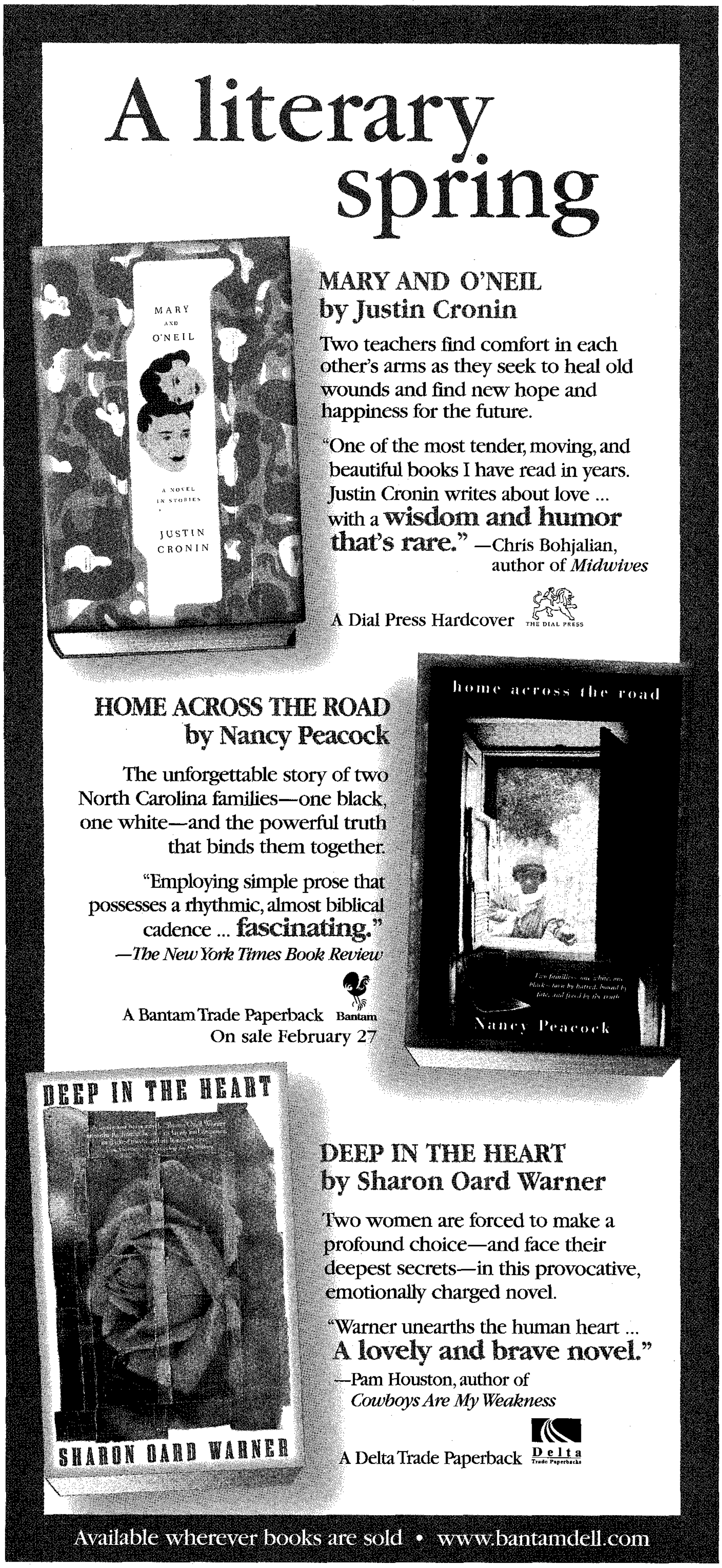

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and visually satisfying, features a would-be corpse sprawled among ominous stalks in a dress by Marni. Others wear Vuitton, X-Girl, and Jil Sander—who knew expiring could be so stylish? Through March 3. (Von Lintel & Nusser, 555 W. 25th St. 242-0599.)

BILL OWENS
If the nineteen-seventies had a staff photographer, it was Owens. He slipped innocuously into and around suburban houses, yards, and streets, documenting the decade's material culture. The resulting "Suburbia," published in 1973, became an instant cult classic; the color prints on show here, taken at the same time, were added to a recent re-issue of the book. Owens' eye is so receptive and so objective that even seedy and familiar touchstones of the time, water beds, macramé, and hot-tub parties, appear fresh and surprisingly innocent. Through March 10. (Morris, 465 W. 23rd St. 727-2752.)

WOLFGANG TILLMANS
This London-based photographer won the Turner Prize last year for soulful, deceptively casual snapshots of his free-loving, vagabondish friends. But apart from a few hyper-closeups of straphangers on the tube (including what is probably the world's largest photo of an armpit), his current show eschews the human figure. Instead, we get a multimedia barrage of darkroom abstractions, prints from doctored landscape negatives, and details of ragged clothing, sometimes in huge digital blowup. The protean creativity of it all feels smarmily self-involved. Through Feb. 24. (Rosen, 525 W. 24th St. 627-6000.)

LARRY TOWELL / TAMAS REVESZ
The Mennonites Towell met and documented for this series are migrant farmers who work their way through his home province of Ontario every year before returning to Mexico, one of the last places their life style is financially feasible. He caught their new baseball caps and old-fashioned haystacks, their rubber-tired, horse-drawn buggies, and their adolescents' minor rebellions—one boy smokes a cigarette while his friends smile nervously behind him—in soft black-and-white. Revesz's small, high-contrast pictures of contemporary New York, which line the hallway leading out of the gallery, offer a welcome familiarity. Both shows through Feb. 24. (Leica, 670 Broadway. 777-3051.)

KARLHEINZ WEINBERGER / J. D. 'OKHAI OJEIKERE
These two photographers document the ways their subjects adorn themselves, one focussing below the waist and the other above the shoulders. Weinberger's nineteen-fifties pictures of Swiss greasers show a style of proletarian dandyism epitomized by modified bluejeans—nuts and bolts close the fly—held up by hubcap-size, homemade Elvis belt buckles. The Nigerian-born Ojeikere photographs his home country's braided hair styles in the clinical black-and-white that Bernd and Hilla Becher use to document water towers and grain silos. Ojeikere's visual typology includes the crowning "Roundabout Kiko," the Princess Leia-esque "Double Brush Kiko," and "Ito Lozi," whose name refers to its crablike look. Both shows through March 31. (Scalo, 560 Broadway. 334-9393.)

"STRAIGHT ARROWS"
These four young photographers—Melanie Einzig, Matt Harnett, Peter Kayafas, and Gus Powell—are updating straight street photography—no casting, no scripting, no digital adjustments, just natural light, old-fashioned cameras, and live action. New York and its citizens—maybe you're in one of these—look better than usual from the artists' distinct, often wry, perspectives. Through March 17. (Meyerowitz, 580 Broadway. 625-3434.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
"Andy Warhol: Photography" opens with a chronology in archive photographs: the artist as a skinny kid and a surprisingly clownish young man (bulbous nose, early receding hairline), then finally reborn as the consummate club kid, with a new nose, new hair, and a new life. His early reproductions of accident photographs begin the retrospective, introducing his first pet subject, morbidity, and leading easily into his second, celebrity, in materials for Jackie Kennedy silk screens—displayed with a

friend's telling narrative of the intense, erotic afternoon he and Andy spent watching coverage of the Kennedy shooting. The celebrity silk screens and Polaroids that followed fill the lower galleries, but viewers will be forgiven for wandering into **"Perfecting Mankind: Eugenics and Photography"** and mistaking it for more Warhol materials—these catalogues of racial types scour the human face with the obsessive gaze, and inherent tragedy, of his early work. Both shows through March 18, at Midtown. Uptown, Carrie Mae Weems's "The Hampton Project" is up through April 1. (Uptown: 1130 Fifth Ave., at 93rd St. Midtown: 1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 860-1777. Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10-5; Fridays, 10-8; Saturdays and Sundays, 10-6.)

Short List

THOMAS JOSHUA COOPER
Kelly, 43 Mercer St. 343-2405.
Through March 3.

BILL JACOBSON
Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 627-2410.
Through March 10.

NINO MIGLIORI
De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 327-1482.
Through March 3.

"MARITIME ALBUM"
PaineWebber, Sixth Ave. at 52nd St.
713-2885. Through April 1.

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

Miller Theatre hosts the world premières of John Musto's Clarinet Sextet and "The Book of Uncommon Prayer" on February 24.

EDEL RODRIGUEZ

METROPOLITAN OPERA
The house presents a revival of Jean-Pierre Ponnelle's production of Rossini's **"L'Italiana in Algeri,"** with Jennifer Larmore, Paul Austin Kelly, Alessandro Corbelli, and Samuel Ramey; conducted by Bruno Campanella. (Feb. 14 at 8, Feb. 17 at 1:30, and Feb. 24 at 8.) ♦ With Wendy White, Matthew Polenzani, and Roberto di Candia replacing Ms. Larmore, Mr. Kelly, and Mr. Corbelli. (Feb. 21 at 8.) ♦ **"La Traviata,"** with Patricia Racette, Roberto Aronica, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky in the leading roles; Jun Märkl. (Feb. 15 at 8.) ♦ With Zvetelina Vassileva (in her Met début) and Ramón Vargas replacing Ms. Racette and Mr. Aronica. (Feb. 23 at 8.) ♦ With Ms. Racette, Mr. Vargas, and Mr. Hvorostovsky. (Feb. 27 at 7:30.) ♦ Massenet's **"Manon,"** another Ponnelle production, with Ruth Ann Swenson, Giuseppe Sabbatini, Mr. di Candia, and Paul Plishka; Julius Rudel. (Feb. 16, Feb. 19, and Feb. 26 at 8.) ♦ With Mark Oswald and Hao Jiang Tian replacing Messrs. di Candia and Plishka. (Feb. 22 at 8.) ♦ The first performances this season of **"Così Fan Tutte,"** with Melanie Diener (a début), Susan Graham, Dawn Upshaw, Paul Groves, Rodney Gilfry, and Michele Pertusi; Patrick Summers. (Feb. 17 and Feb. 20 at 8 and Feb. 24 at 1:30.) (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

"THE MAKROPULOS CASE"
BAM presents "Věc Makropulos" (1925), the most perfectly crafted and vividly characterized of Janáček's operas, in the critically acclaimed Nikolaus Lehnhoff production by the Glyndebourne Festival, which brings its forces to the U.S. for the first time. Sung in the original Czech, with English surtitles; David Atherton conducts the Brooklyn Philharmonic. (BAM Opera House, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn. 718-636-4100. Feb. 15 and Feb. 17 at 7:30.)

LES ARTS FLORISSANTS
William Christie, the longtime director of the French early-music ensemble, has made the group into perhaps the most disciplined and elegant in the world. They present an operatic double bill at Alice Tully Hall of Purcell's "Dido and Aeneas" and Charpentier's "Actéon." (Feb. 14-15 at 8. 721-6500.)

"THE EMPEROR JONES"
Operaworks continues its staging of Louis Gruenberg's opera, based on the play by Eugene O'Neill. The baritone Frederick Redd is Jones; David Leighton conducts. (78th Street Theatre Lab, 236 W. 78th St. 946-6379. Feb. 14, Feb. 16-17, Feb. 19, Feb. 21, Feb. 23-24, and Feb. 26 at 8.)

"THE RAPE OF LUCRETIA"
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and politics set in ancient Rome. (Dicapo Opera Theatre, 184 E. 76th St., at Lexington Ave. 288-9438. Feb. 16-17 at 8, Feb. 18 at 4, Feb. 23-24 at 8, and Feb. 25 at 4.)

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Roberto Abbado conducts music by Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff (the "Paganini Rhapsody," with the pianist Vladimir Feltsman), and Stravinsky. (Feb. 15-17 at 8 and Feb. 20 at 7:30.) ♦ Perhaps no German composer has had as complicated a relationship with his country's musical past as Hans Werner Henze, who suffered the traumatic experience of being drafted into the Wehrmacht in the last days of the war, at the age of seventeen. After absorbing the operatic traditions of his adopted home, Italy, and writing radical, Communist-themed works in the nineteen-seventies, Henze has since reëngaged with his heritage in a number of symphonic works. Kurt Masur leads the U.S. première of the Ninth Symphony, which, like Beethoven's, employs a chorus (here the Berlin Radio Choir). To start the program, the young American pianist Jonathan Biss joins the choir in Beethoven's "Choral Fantasy." (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-6500. Feb. 23-24 at 8 and Feb. 27 at 7:30.)

RUSSIAN NATIONAL ORCHESTRA
Vladimir Spivakov conducts Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5 and Piano Concerto No. 2; for the latter work the soloist is Mikhail Pletnev, the orchestra's former music director, whose "Jubilee Overture" begins the program. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 15 at 8.)

EOS ORCHESTRA
Bernard Herrmann has long been admired for his film scores, but his opera "Wuthering Heights" has gone begging for performances. The orchestra (with the mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, the baritone Nathan Gunn, and narrator Cherry Jones) will perform excerpts from that score, along with music from "Psycho," the world première of "La Belle Dame sans Merci," and Schoenberg's "Accompaniment to a Film Scene." Jonathan Sheffer conducts. (Ethical Culture Society, 2 W. 64th St. 691-6415. Feb. 15 at 8.)

JUPITER SYMPHONY
Feb. 19 at 2 and 7 and Feb. 20 at 8: Jens Nygaard conducts music by Beethoven (the Symphony No. 4), Czerny, Gounod, and Ives (some songs, with the baritone Thomas Buckner). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. 799-1259.)

VOX VOCAL ENSEMBLE: ROBERT PARSONS
Probably everyone who has passed through a good English choir has sung the exquisite five-voice Ave Maria by Parsons (1530-70), but the rest of his work has remained obscure. George Steel, the new-music maven of Miller Theatre, has an unusual devotion to the Tudor composer, whose work he will conduct in the first of two concerts. (St. Paul's Chapel, Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799. Feb. 20 at 8.)

IL GIARDINO ARMONICO
The Italian early-music orchestra presents an all-Vivaldi program, with the mezzo-soprano Cecilia Bartoli. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 20 at 8:30.)

SAN FRANCISCO SYMPHONY
Carnegie Hall has made the music of Stravinsky a prime focus this season, a cause that the San Francisco Symphony will advance with an all-Stravinsky program under its music director, Michael Tilson Thomas: "Les Noces," the "Symphony of Psalms," and the melodrama "Perséphone." The American Boychoir, the San Francisco Symphony Chorus, and a host of vocal soloists will assist. (Feb. 21 at 8.) ♦ Mr. Thomas, the orchestra, and the chorus return for an all-Mahler program (the Adagio from the Symphony No. 10 and "Das Klagende Lied"), with the singers Christine Goerke, Michelle DeYoung, Jon Villars, and Clayton Brainerd. (247-7800. Feb. 22 at 8.)

CHOIR OF CORPUS CHRISTI CHURCH
The Music Before 1800 series presents the church's impressive choir on its home ground, singing music by Josquin, Couperin, and others. (529 W. 121st St. 666-9266. Feb. 25 at 4.)

PHILADELPHIA ORCHESTRA
Vladimir Ashkenazy's program is a lesson in how the essential values of French music—lightness, luxury, precision—have endured from the time of Ravel, Debussy ("La Mer"), and Roussel to the contemporary master Henri Dutillieux, whose cello concerto "Tout un Monde Lointain . . . ," originally composed for Rostropovich, is played by Steven Isserlis. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. Feb. 27 at 8.)

RECITALS

KING'S SINGERS: "LOVE'S PHILOSOPHY"
The British ensemble of six male singers, always skillful at balancing lighter and more substantive fare, presents a Valentine's Day program of music on both sacred and secular themes by such composers as Górecki, Sibelius, Schubert, Gesualdo, and Libby Larsen (a première). (St. Bartholomew's Church, Park Ave. at 50th St. 378-0248. Feb. 14 at 7:30.)

BARGEMUSIC
The music of Ernest Bloch (1880-1959) combined a firm neoclassical technique with plangent reminiscences of his Jewish background; three programs, coördinated by the violist Paul Neubauer, celebrate his achievement. Feb. 15-16 at 7:30: Bloch's Suite for Viola and Piano, along with music by Haydn, Schumann, and Mahler (Alfred Schnittke's realization of the Piano Quartet). ♦ Feb. 17 at 7:30: The Bloch Suite, along with his Concertino for Flute, Violin, and Piano and two lighter works by Beethoven. ♦ Feb. 18 at 4: The Concertino and the Beethoven again, along with two of Bloch's

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best-known pieces for viola and piano, "Meditation and Processional" and "Suite Hébraïque" (with Margo Garrett). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

ITZHAK PERLMAN
The violinist, with the pianist Rohan de Silva, performs a concert in tribute to Jascha Heifetz, celebrating the hundredth anniversary of his birth. (Avery Fisher Hall. 721-5600. Feb. 25 at 3.)

MILLER THEATRE
Feb. 22 at 8: The noted new-music group Ensemble 21, with its intrepid pianist, Marilyn Nonken, devotes an entire concert to the music of Karlheinz Stockhausen, the once and future king of the German avant-garde. Classics like "Kontake" (1960) and "Klavierstücke IV" (1954) remain brilliant, complex, and unsettling creations. ♦ Feb. 24 at 8: An evening of music by John Musto, an American composer-pianist whose music fluently combines classical sophistication with pop theatricality. The performers include not only Mr. Musto but the clarinettist David Krakauer, the Flux String Quartet, and the baritone William Sharp. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 854-7799.)

SEQUITUR
The theatrically minded new-music ensemble celebrates its fifth birthday with a program of premières: music by Randall Woolf ("The Trick Is to Keep Breathing"), Lewis Spratlan, and Mathew Rosenblum. The evening ends with a performance of Sam Shepard and Joseph Chaikin's "Tongues," for actor and percussion. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. 501-3330. Feb. 27 at 8.)

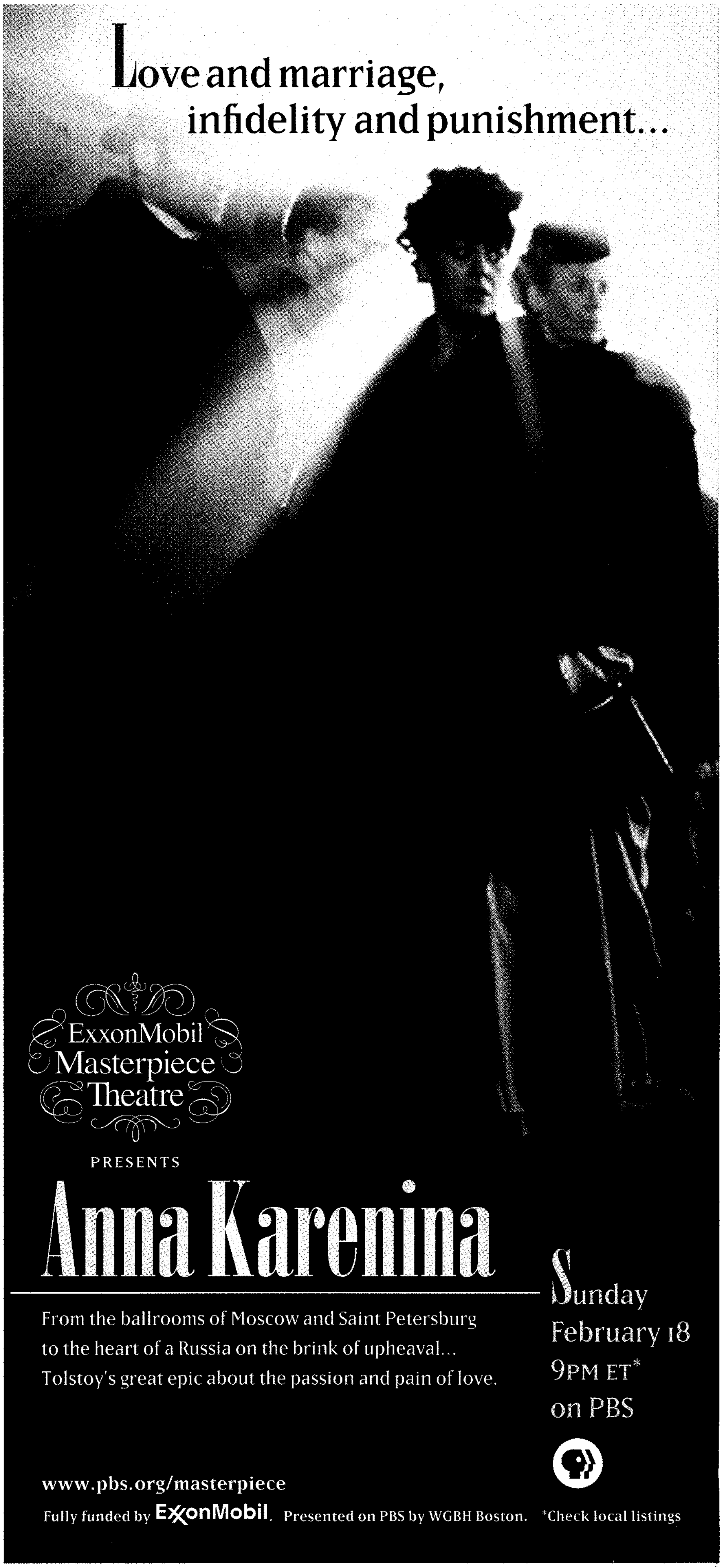
ABOVE AND BEYOND

"GECKO SUITE & BALL"
The downtown poet and performance artist Edwin Torres presents two intriguing pieces at the Kitchen. The first, "Gecko Suite: An Opera in Three Colors," has a traditional narrative structure. In five acts, Torres, along with the dancer Gina Bonati and two other performers, enacts the story of a quixotic dreamer named Gecko. "It is about the timeless tragedy of being lost," Torres explains. "Being lost in your own mind." The second piece is described by Torres as "nonlinear," and it features microphones, bouncing balls, a percussionist, and the poet himself. (512 W. 19th St. 255-5793. Feb. 15-17 at 8, with a post-performance discussion on the 15th.)

"THE GREAT BACKYARD BIRD COUNT"
This is a performance of another sort. The Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the National Audubon Society have organized the fourth annual tally of wildfowl for the upcoming long weekend, Feb. 16-19. Participants—and that's anyone in the country who is willing—count the number of birds they see, and how much time they spend counting. The results are posted on a Web site, www.birdsource.org, which also has more detailed instructions.

READINGS
Feb. 14 at 8: By the proto-punk musician and author Richard Hell and by the poet Vincent Katz. (St. Marks In-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. Tickets at the door.) ♦ Feb. 14 at 8: Keira Naughton, Robert Sean Leonard, and other actors read stories about love in New York City by Melissa Bank, Russell Banks, and David Schickler. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.) ♦ Feb. 15 at 7:30: The writers Stacia Decker, Nancy Agabian, Elise Miller, and Jeremy Simon offer a post-Valentine's Day reading of nonfiction about strange and unsuccessful love affairs. (Halcyon, 227 Smith St., Brooklyn. For more information, call 718-260-9299.)

TALKS
Feb. 15 at 7: Gertje R. Utley, the author of "Picasso: The Communist Years," discusses the artist's involvement with the French Communist Party. (Tinker Auditorium, French Institute–Alliance Française, 22 E. 60th St. 355-6100.) ♦ Feb. 15 at 8:15: Thomas Herman, a writer with the *Wall Street Journal,* talks about economic policy with Robert Reich, a former secretary of labor under President Clinton. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 996-1100.)



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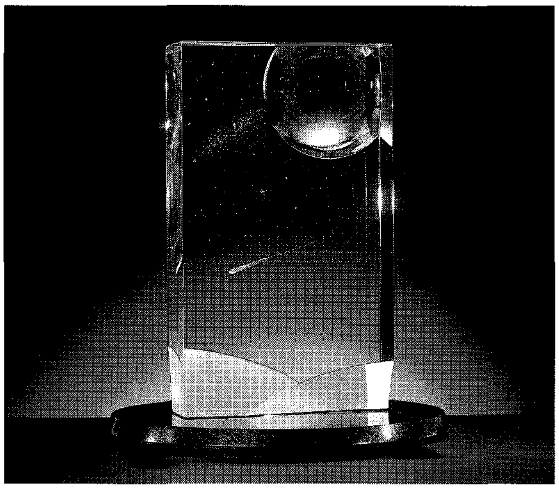

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BOOK CURRENTS

Sad But True

When Robert Burton published "The Anatomy of Melancholy," in 1621, humans beings were still governed by the four humors: blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and the worrisome black bile, which was believed to cause melancholia. It wasn't until the late nineteenth century that modern medicine, psychiatry, and pharmacology began to redefine melancholy as the clinical depression we know today. Now, when people talk about how blue they are, they're more inclined to mention serotonin-reuptake inhibitors than to cite Aristotle or Homer, as Burton did. But a few recent books suggest that it's still possible to wax literary when it comes to feeling down.

Jeffery Smith, in **WHERE THE ROOTS REACH FOR WATER** (North Point), points out that "melancholia" rarely appears in the current lexicon of depression. Yet, in this memoir of his own harrowing bout, Smith backs away from Zoloft, investing his hope in various old-school treatments and describing his debilitation in decidedly poetic terms. Lyrical language abounds in **THE NATURE OF MELANCHOLY** (Oxford), a compendium of historic and contemporary writings edited by Jennifer Radden. Hildegard of Bingen (1098-1179) conjectures that melancholy descends genetically from Adam, while, more recently, the post-Freudian linguist Julia Kristeva offers a modern theory that suggests an updated version of black bile.

According to Tom Lutz, in **CRYING: THE NATURAL & CULTURAL HISTORY OF TEARS** (Norton), certain depressives are unable to cry. Nevertheless, tears have their own illuminating history: Burton connected them with the four humors, while Timothie Bright, the celebrated sixteenth-century British physician, declared tears "the excrementitious humiditie of the brayne."

—*Mark Rozzo*

TONY MILLIONAIRE

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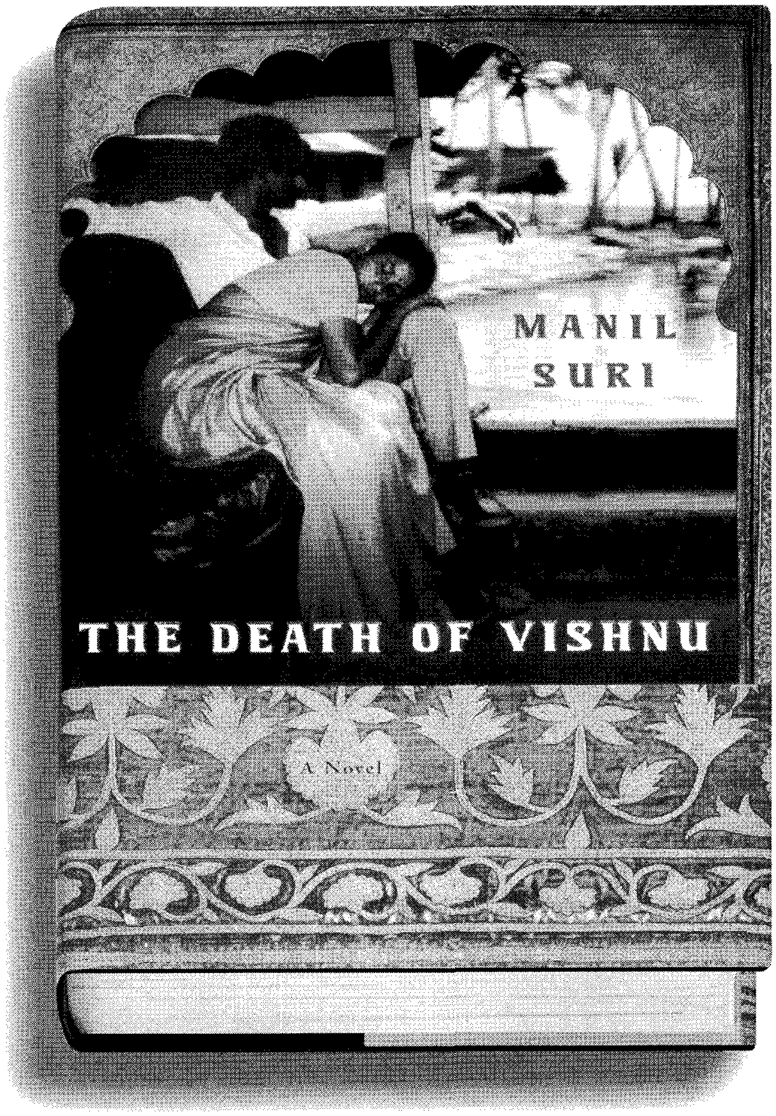

THE DEATH OF VISHNU

by Manil Suri

As the servant Vishnu spends his final moments on the steps of a Bombay apartment block, a cacophony of everyday events swirls around him. Mrs. Pathak and Mrs. Asrani bicker over the shared kitchen while their husbands carefully avoid conflict; Kavita dreams of being a movie star and flirts with the Muslim boy upstairs. In his highly lauded first novel, Manil Suri presents a microcosm of contemporary Indian life, magically interwoven with the spiritual reconciliations of a dying man. (Norton)

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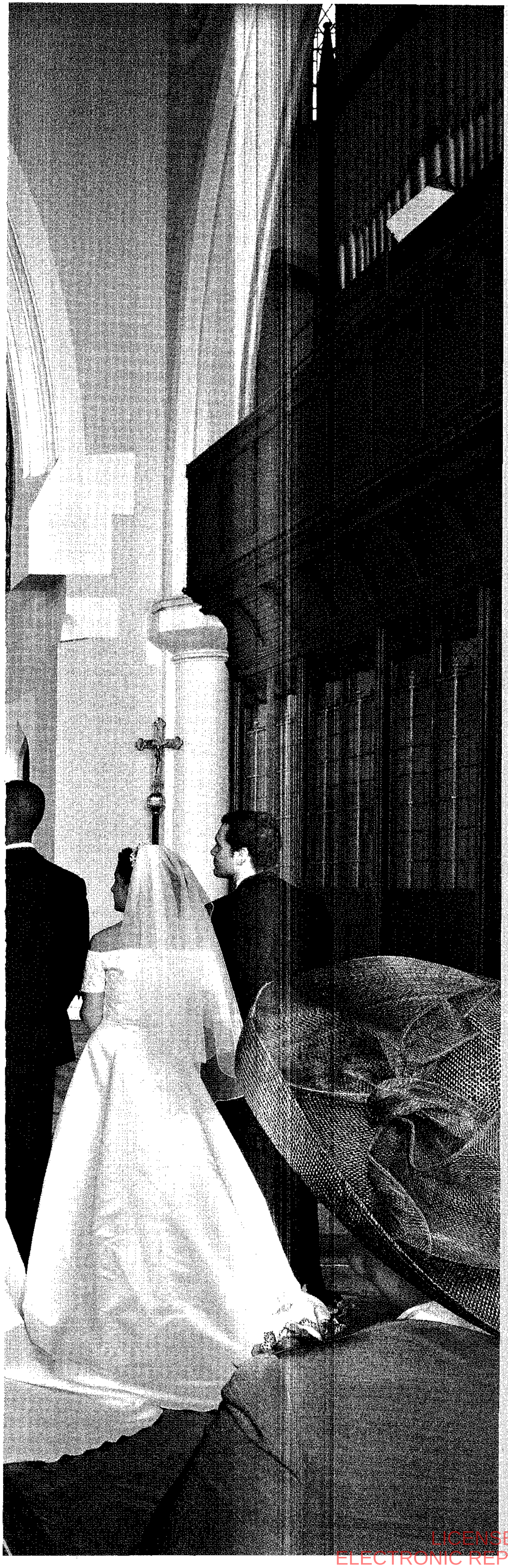

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MOVIES OPENING

COMPANY MAN
A Connecticut grammar-school teacher (Douglas McGrath) pretends to be a C.I.A. agent in this comedy co-written and co-directed by McGrath with Peter Askin. Also with Sigourney Weaver and John Turturro. Opening Feb. 23.

DOWN TO EARTH
A remake of "Heaven Can Wait" with Chris Rock as a comedian who dies prematurely and gets sent back to Earth inside the body of a white man. Directed by Chris and Paul Weitz. Opening Feb. 16.

LAST RESORT
Paul Pawlikowski directed this social-realist film about a Russian mother and son who emigrate to England. Opening Feb. 23.

MONKEYBONE
A part live-action, part animated fantasy drama about a cartoonist (Brendan Fraser) who teams up with one of his creations while trapped in an unconscious state. Directed by Henry Selick. Opening Feb. 23.

POLLOCK
Ed Harris directs and plays Jackson Pollock, in this bio-pic with Marcia Gay Harden, Amy Madigan, and Jeffrey Tambor. Opening Feb. 16.

THE PRICE OF MILK
Harry Sinclair wrote and directed this surreal romantic comedy, set on a dairy farm in New Zealand. Opening Feb. 14.

RHYTHM 'N' BAYOUS
Robert Mugge's latest music documentary captures the blues dives, zydeco clubs, and gospel churches of Louisiana. Opening Feb. 16. (The Screening Room.)

SOUTHERN COMFORT
Kate Davis directed this documentary about Robert Eads, a transgendered female-to-male residing in rural Georgia. Opening Feb. 21. (Film Forum.)

SWEET NOVEMBER
A remake of the 1968 romantic drama about a woman who takes in a new man each month and then sends him packing at the end of it. With Charlize Theron and Keanu Reeves. Directed by Pat O'Connor. Opening Feb. 16.

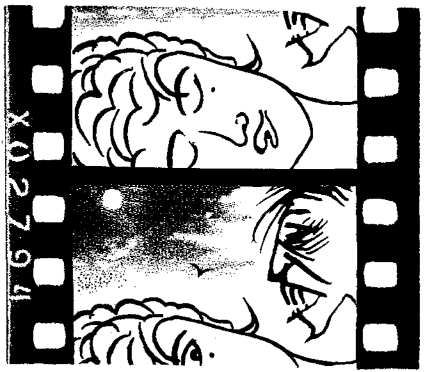
3000 MILES TO GRACELAND
An action picture in which a gang of thieves rob a Las Vegas casino during an Elvis Presley convention. With Kevin Costner, Kurt Russell, and Courteney Cox Arquette. Directed by Demian Lichtenstein. Opening Feb. 23.

YOM YOM
An existentialist drama directed by Amos Gitai, about a man living in modern-day Haifa who's part of an Arab-Israeli family. In Hebrew. Opening Feb. 16. (Anthology Film Archives.)

FILM NOTES

CHUNHYANG
Imagine a cross between a Homeric rhapsode, chanting one of the epics in front of a roaring fire, and the blues singer Muddy Waters. That's roughly the sound produced by the great Korean entertainer Cho Sang Hyun. As the film opens, he sits onstage before a contemporary audience and sings of an eighteenth-century Korean Romeo and Juliet. Then we see the tale: in Namwon Province, the governor's son—fifteen-year-old Mongryong (Cho Seung Woo), who has a man's voice and a man's determination—falls in love with, pursues, and immediately marries Chunhyang (Lee Hyo Jung), the beautiful daughter of a courtesan. The scenes of the slender teen-agers courting and making love have a delicate erotic strength—a mixture of shyness and lust—that is nearly unimaginable in a modern Western setting. Directed by Im Kwon Taek, who has made more than ninety films. In Korean.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 1/22/01.) (Quad Cinema.)

CONAN THE BARBARIAN
At the beginning of this 1982 adaptation of Robert E. Howard's pulp prehistoric legend, Conan's father tells him to trust only in steel; then he watches as his dad is felled by the forces of Thulsa Doom (played by James Earl Jones, in a Darth Vader redux) and devoured by attack dogs. Soon afterward, Little Orphan Conan holds his mother's hand as Doom lops off her head. No wonder the adult Conan (Arnold Schwarzenegger) says the best part of life is "to crush your enemies . . . and hear the lamentations of their women." Working from a script by himself and Oliver Stone, the director John Milius creates a single mood: Hadean anarchy, with skulls dropping like dandruff. As a director, he's a bit of a barbaric thief himself, referencing every possible epic-movie master from Eisenstein to Peckinpah; too bad even the climactic battle, an homage to Kurosawa's "Seven Samurai," goes by in a sandy haze. Luckily, Schwarzenegger is, in context, rather likable; his ultra-blank deadpan provides an amusing comment on all the sound and the fury exploding around him.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Feb. 24.)



FAITHLESS
Marianne (Lena Endre) is an actress, married to a conductor named Markus (Thomas Hanzon). They have a young daughter, Isabelle (Michelle Gylemo), and a disreputable best friend, David (Krister Henriksson). All is well until sex marches in, closely followed by love, with divorce bringing up the rear. The whole sorry episode is recounted by a troubled and impatient Marianne to an aging writer (Erland Josephson), who is either recalling her or imagining her. The movie was scripted by Ingmar Bergman (who no longer makes movies) and directed by Liv Ullmann, the greatest of his leading ladies; comparing it with their former collaborations, you have to say that not much has changed in the lives of Swedes. The earnestness of attitude, the grimness of the humor, and the careful compositions will perplex audiences too young to have seen Bergman movies and sadden, mostly by force of nostalgia, those devoted moviegoers who were raised on little else. In Swedish.—*Anthony Lane* (1/29/01) (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Union Square.)

THE GIFT
After the snows of "A Simple Plan," Sam Raimi warms up by venturing south; his new movie was shot in Savannah, Georgia, although it still tries to chill the blood. Cate Blanchett stars as Annie, who combines the demanding roles of widow, single mother, clairvoyant, and shrink. One of her clients (Hilary Swank) complains of a violent husband (Keanu Reeves), who not only menaces Annie but ends up taking the rap for the disappearance of a local good-time girl (Katie Holmes). Add Greg Kinnear as an ominously pleasant wimp, and you have a full-strength cast bending its talents to fit a small piece of Gothic nonsense. You get sharp frights and looming fogs, plus innumerable nods to the perils of water, but running underneath it all is a sluggish solemnity, a hint that these horrors are meant to be important. As Raimi's budgets have grown, his cackling sense of fun has begun to shrivel.—*A.L.* (1/15/01) (Battery Park 16, Beekman, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Orpheum VII, and Union Square.)

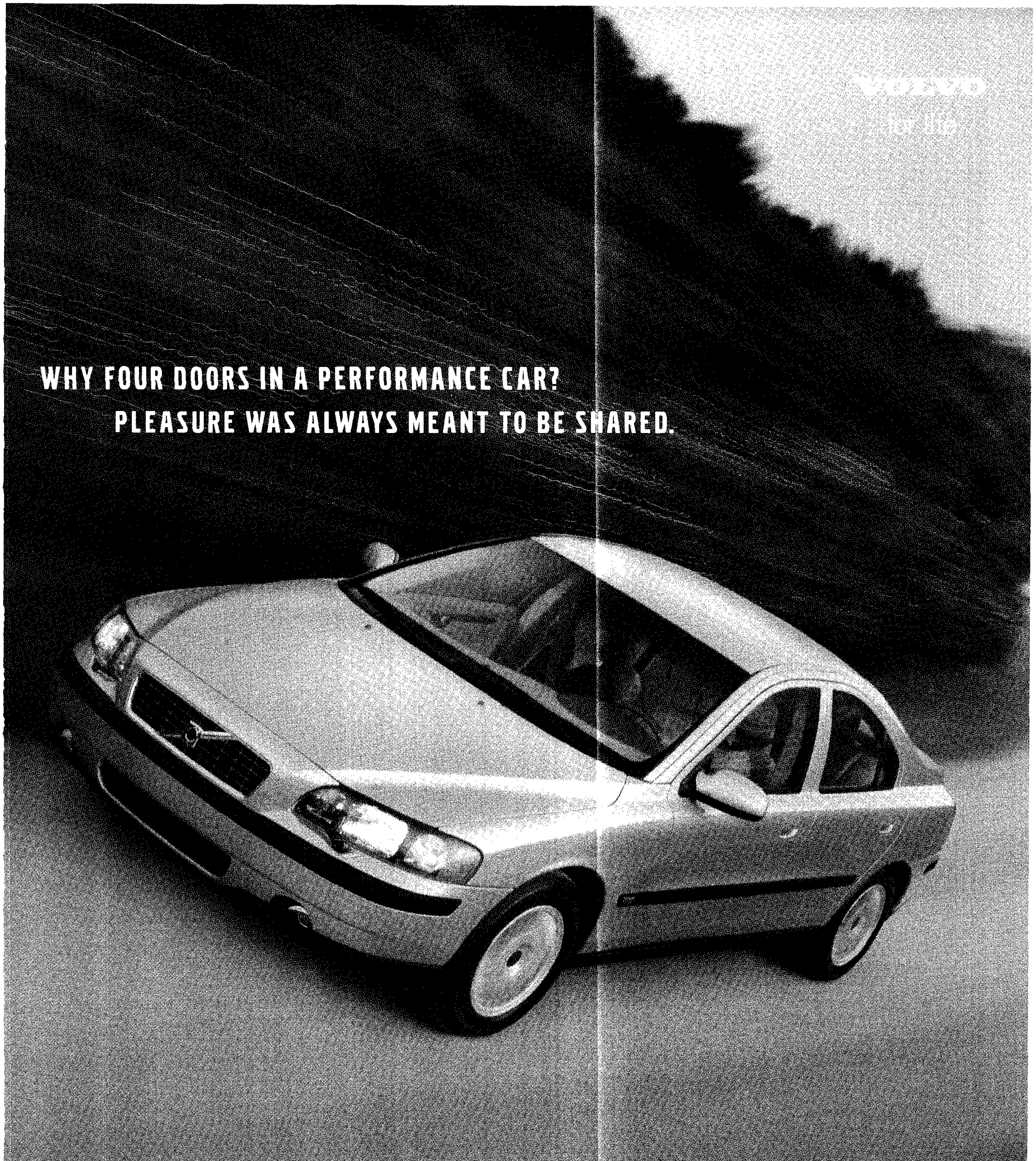
HANNIBAL
Ten years after "The Silence of the Lambs," Hannibal Lecter returns to the table. He is played, once again, by Anthony Hopkins, who seems both more placid—as you would expect, for the doctor has been enjoying his freedom—and more particular in his cravings. Lecter is in Florence, where he is suspected by a local detective (Giancarlo Giannini, the best and most rumpled thing in the movie). Also on the trail is Clarice Starling (Julianne Moore), who is now an outcast within the F.B.I. Huntress and prey finally meet; indeed, we are given to understand that they can barely keep away from each other. What spoils the harmony is the vengeful presence of Mason Verger (played by an uncredited star), one of Lecter's less decorous victims. The screenwriters, David Mamet and Steven Zaillian, do a good job of sifting the dross from Thomas Harris's novel, and the director, Ridley Scott, gets elegant value from what remains. The locations are lush, the reworked ending could not be neater, and the special effects were apparently devised by an abattoir. There's just one problem, and it's insurmountable: this is not a scary movie. You may gawp or flinch, but your pulse, like that of Dr. Lecter himself, will stay disappointingly slow.—*A.L.* (2/12/01) (Astor Plaza, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, Union Square, Waverly, and Ziegfeld.)

IN THE MOOD FOR LOVE
The latest film from the talented young Hong Kong writer-director Wong Kar Wai makes us pant for adultery. In the early sixties, in a community of Shanghai refugees living in Hong Kong, Mrs. Chan (Maggie Cheung) and Mr. Chow (Tony Leung) are next-door neighbors in a friendly apartment building. The perfectly dressed and coiffed couple meet, talk, and realize that their frequently travelling spouses are off having an affair with each other. What to do? The movie is all about sensual anticipation. Nat King Cole croons on the soundtrack, and the camera caresses the rain on the streets and the texture of a stone wall in the semi-darkness. So skillfully does the director bring us to a state of breathless expectation that when he refuses to deliver the goods he almost seems to have invented a new form of perversion. In Cantonese and French.—*D.D.* (2/5/01) (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

LEFT BEHIND: THE MOVIE
If the first thing that comes to mind when you hear the word "Rapture" is Blondie, then start stocking up on food and water. This movie, based on the first book in a best-selling series of fundamentalist-Christian novels, takes the events of the Book of Revelation and transposes them to modern times. The result looks and plays out like an after-school special about the Apocalypse. Kirk Cameron is Buck Williams, an intrepid reporter for GNN who "would have reported on Hiroshima from ground zero if he'd been there." Millions of people all over the world have vanished, and those "left behind" can't quite figure out why. Buck investigates various angles—radiation, alien interference—and the movie documents his lengthy procession toward belief. Read your Bible carefully. A global currency, the ascendancy of the U.N., the telling detail that the Antichrist will have a Russian accent—it's all there.—*Michael Agger* (Battery Park 16 and Empire 25.)

LEGEND
As you might guess from the generic title of this static yet unsteady spectacle, it is not an attempt to create any old medieval fable, but *the* medieval fable. The director, Ridley Scott, and his screenwriter, William Hjortsberg, will not settle for having young Jack o' the Green (a lacklustre Tom Cruise) and some helpful elves and gnomes defend the virtuous princess Lili (Mia Sara) against ogres and goblins. No, Jack must defeat no less a villain than the Lord of Darkness (Tim Curry), who appears here complete with horns and cleft hooves. Scott does come up with images fit for an illuminated storybook, and for a second or two, when Lili touches a unicorn, he approaches the sensual wonder of pre-Raphaelite paintings.—*M.S.* (Walter Reade Theatre; Feb. 24-25.)

THE LEGEND OF RITA
In which the vibrant young actress Bibiana Beglau warms up the heretofore dour German director Volker Schlöndorff. Beglau plays Rita Vogt, a fictional West German terrorist of the nineteen-seventies who believes she is bringing the armed struggles of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the Third World to the capitalist strongholds. Rita is a fool, but we can't take our eyes off Beglau. Her character robs banks, shoots a Paris policeman, and escapes to East Germany, where she enjoys the protection of an intelligence operative (Martin Wuttke) and winds up in a dreary textile plant, cast among women who are dying to get to the West. But Rita retains her fervor for "the Revolution" right up to 1989. Beglau, who is twenty-eight and has appeared in the theatre and in small movie roles, has a challenging stare and a ferocious will that seems to originate somewhere in her lower back and go straight up her spine into her neck and head, which is held proud and high, like a ballerina's. She throws her sinewy body into whatever she's doing, whether it's work, sex, or stickups. Schlöndorff's narrative is equally direct, abrupt, and vivid. In German.—*D.D.* (2/5/01) (Film Forum.)

THE LOST WORLD

The key to the charm of Arthur Conan Doyle's pioneer sci-fi adventure (the acknowledged ancestor of "Jurassic Park" and its sequel, also called "The Lost World") is that he found a central character as dynamic as his dinosaurs: the bloody-minded professor George Edward Challenger, the prototype of the cantankerous "action intellectual" in pop fiction. Wallace Beery is superbly blustery in this boldly designed 1925 silent version of Challenger's trip to an Amazon plateau that time forgot. The director, Harry Hoyt, adroitly mixes live creatures (such as a couple of cute spectacled bears) into the jungle journey, and even when Challenger and his fellow explorers confront ape-men in disastrous makeup the cast (including Bessie Love, Lewis Stone, and Lloyd Hughes) maintains the appropriate awe and fright. The prehistoric giants of the special-effects master Willis O'Brien are more poetically primordial than today's computer-generated reptiles. It's as if they weren't made by hand, but by fang and claw.—*M.S.* (*Walter Reade Theatre; Feb. 19-21.*)

PANIC

William H. Macy at his melancholy best as the son of a former hit man (Donald Sutherland) who has inherited the family business and now wants out. Sutherland's performance as the controlling dad seethes with an almost Iago-like manipulativeness, and Macy, the obedient son, embodies the compartmentalized behavior of a man desperately trying to separate who he is from what he does. Henry Bromell, the writer/director, has a still, understated storytelling style, and he gives Macy's home life a heartbreaking sadness—he's a loving father to his son, while his wife, kept in the dark about his true vocation, has grown distant. When Macy seeks the help of an analyst (it's the current hot plot device), the story takes a darker and more twisted turn.—*Bruce Diones* (Village East Cinemas.)

Opening February 14, "The Price of Milk," a romantic comedy from New Zealand.

RICCARDO VECCHIO

PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE

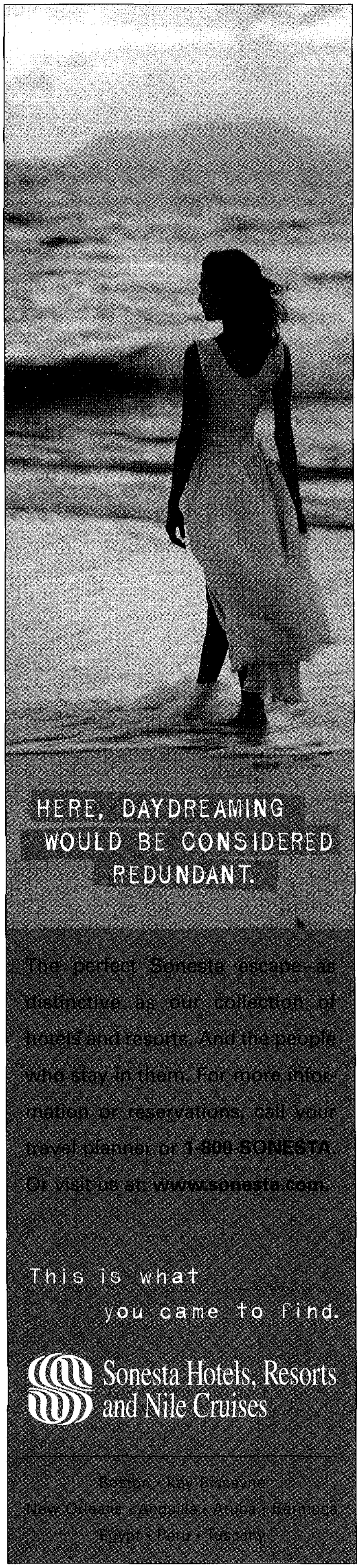
This 1974 satire of horror movies is also a rock musical comedy. The writer-director, Brian De Palma, is drawn to rabid visual exaggeration and to sophisticated slapstick comedy. William Finley is the idealistic young composer who is robbed of his music, busted for drugs, and sent to Sing Sing, all at the instigation of Swan (creepy Paul Williams), the entrepreneur of Death Records, who has made a pact with the Devil for eternal youth. The composer escapes from prison, is maimed by a record-pressing machine, and becomes the Phantom, who haunts Swan's new rock place, the Paradise, where the girl he loves (Jessica Harper) becomes a star. This mixture of "The Phantom of the Opera" and "Faust" isn't enough for De Palma. He heaps on layers of acid-rock satire and parodies of "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari," "The Hunchback of Notre Dame," "Psycho," and "The Picture of Dorian Gray"—and the impacted plots actually work for him. The film is a one-of-a-kind entertainment, with a kinetic, breakneck wit.—*Pauline Kael* (BAM Rose Cinemas; Feb. 25.)

THE PLEDGE

Glum, affecting realism from Sean Penn, directing his third film. In the Reno area, a retired police detective, Jerry Black (Jack Nicholson), becomes convinced that a rapist-murderer who strikes at little girls is about to strike again. Jerry is a good man, but he's so obsessed with the case that he loses his judgment. He takes in a battered waitress (Robin Wright Penn) and her little daughter, and with horror we realize that his feelings for the girl won't stop him from using her as a lure. The movie, based on a novel by the late Swiss writer Friedrich Dürrenmatt, offers a bleak view of isolated people living close to madness. The despair comes heavily and unrelentingly—the colors are mainly gray, the climate wintry—but it feels authentic, and, as a sustained mood, it pulls us into the story. With Sam Shepard and Aaron Eckhart as cops, and Vanessa Redgrave, Helen Mirren, and Mickey Rourke as townspeople. A worthy movie, but don't go expecting an easy time of it.—*D.D.* (1/22/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, East 86th Street Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, and Union Square.)

SAVE THE LAST DANCE

A hip-hop fairy tale. Julia Stiles, the reigning queen of teen movies, plays Sara, a ballet dancer and high-school senior who moves to inner-city Chicago after her mother dies in a car crash. Her love interest is Derek (Sean Patrick Thomas), a Georgetown-bound scholar who performs his own delicate dance: he's ambitious, yet he's trying to maintain his homeboy status. The movie's best scenes are its intimate tutorials—Derek teaches Sara how to sit, stand, and walk the way black people do. Eventually, they kiss, and



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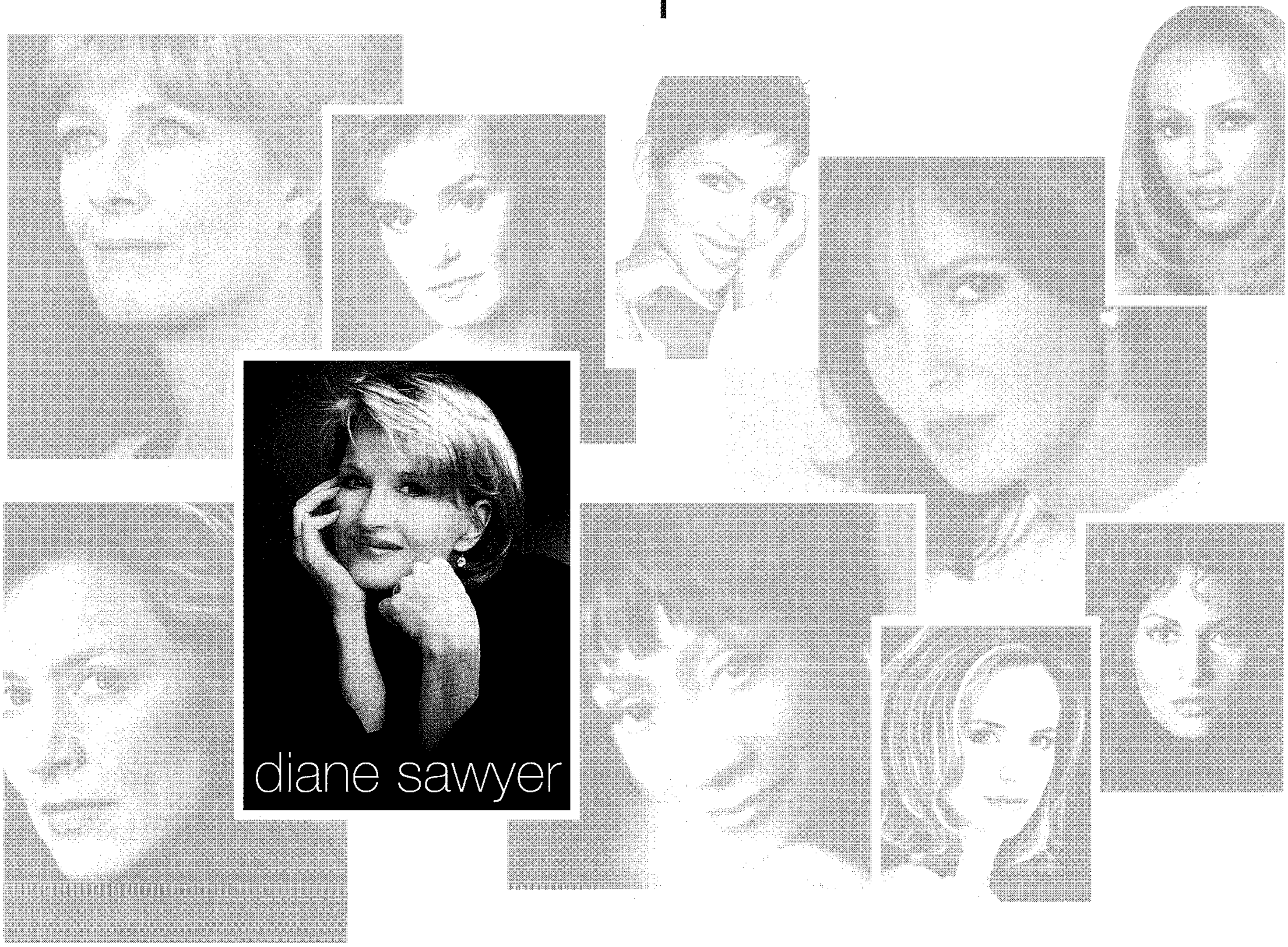

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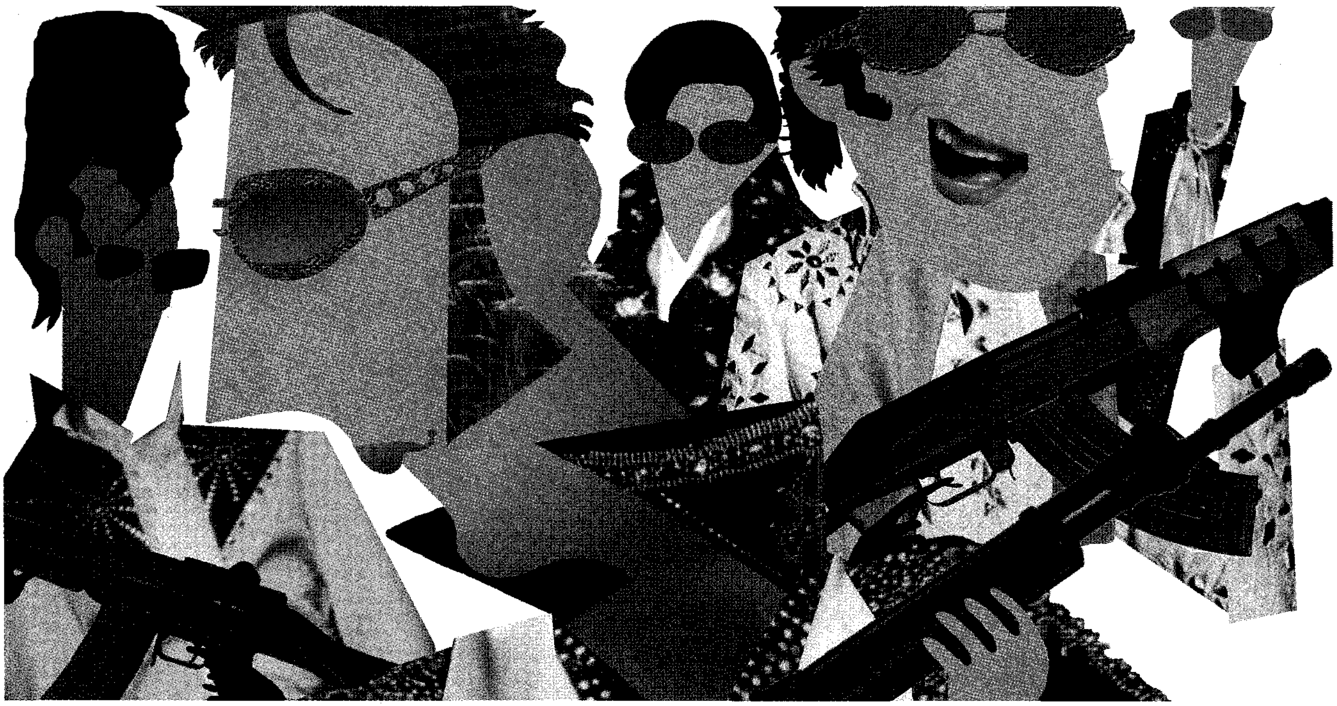
the only people who really freak out are the old white ones—there's a funny scene on the El where they vamp in front of a disapproving lady. The dancing is surprisingly sedate; less so are Stiles's outfits. It may be a long time before she lives down the Princess Leia hair style she sports in the final scenes.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Coronet Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, and Village Theatre VII.)



Thieves disguised as Elvis impersonators heist a Las Vegas casino in "3000 Miles to Graceland," opening February 23.

STEPHEN KRONINGER

SAVING SILVERMAN
Two brilliant comic actors, Steve Zahn and Jack Black, team up as friends who try to persuade their pal (Jason Biggs) not to marry the fiancée from hell (a sexy and cunning Amanda Peet). Director Dennis Dugan moves the story along swiftly and sloppily—the gags are thrown at the audience like pies—but it's the inspired pairing of Zahn (an alluring ringleader with boundless energy) and Black (a natural big-hearted Bozo) which gives the movie its circus appeal.—*B.D.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, 42nd Street E Walk, Lincoln Square, Murray Hill Cinemas, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Union Square.)

SNATCH
Guy Ritchie caused a stir—mistaken by some for a storm—with his first feature, "Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels." Not wishing to tamper with a winning formula, he has returned to the scene of the crime, delivering a further batch of never quite credible Cockneys. They have names like Bullet Tooth Tony (Vinnie Jones) and Brick Top (Alan Ford), and they converse in the artful patois that Ritchie continues to sell as echt. The plot, this time, is more convoluted, involving a diamond theft and a series of boxing matches, none of which, naturally, go according to plan. Ritchie's strength is the running gag; one can only grow fond of a dog that has swallowed a rubber toy and thus squeaks when it tries to bark. His weakness is a hectic, self-advertising style that wearies what it's meant to quicken; you come out feeling sated and soiled. The cast is honored by the presence of Benicio Del Toro, first seen in the garb of a Hasidic Jew, and especially by Brad Pitt, who plays what is rumored to be an Irish Gypsy, although no one, least of all the other characters, can decipher what he has to say.—*A.L.* (1/29/01) (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, Union Square, and Waverly.)

SUGAR & SPICE
The original title was "Sugar & Spice & Semiautomatics," but that was before Columbine. With the dark comedy of Mandy Nelson's screenplay toned down, the result is a teen movie that's an unappealing mix of the generic and the arch. Not that the premise wasn't promising: five pompom girls (of which Mena Suvari and Marley Shelton are two) rob a local bank branch so that one of them, who's pregnant, will be able to raise her twins in proper American comfort. The director, Francine McDougall twirls the material around with a music-video slickness, but the movie still feels schizophrenic and, for all the nubile perkiness of its actresses, flat.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

TRAFFIC
Tremendous stuff from the first shot to the last. Steven Soderbergh's vivid and wide-spanning view of the "war on drugs" presents three parallel stories, each with its own look and style: the furtive and ambiguous work of two Mexican state troopers (Benicio Del Toro and Jacob Vargas); the frantic investigations of the new American drug czar (Michael Douglas), who discovers that his beautiful, intelligent sixteen-year-old daughter (Erika Christensen) is freebasing cocaine; and the luxurious life of a San Diego woman (Catherine Zeta-Jones) who tries to hold on to her fortune when her drug-kingpin husband (Steven Bauer) is arrested and made to stand trial. The first story is photographed in tobacco-stain brown, the second with blue filters, the third in bright sunshine—all by Soderbergh himself, who puts the camera on his shoulder and throws us into the middle of the action. Individually, the scenes play with superb toughness, and the over-all impression is one of high intelligence and great good humor threading its way through a morass.—*D.D.* (12/25/00 & 1/1/01) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Olympia I and II, Orpheum VII, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE WEDDING PLANNER
A featherweight romantic comedy that's purportedly set in San Francisco but takes place in a parallel universe where Jennifer Lopez is Sicilian and spends her Friday nights watching "Antiques Roadshow." Lopez's Mary, the wedding planner of the title, falls for one of her clients (Matthew McConaughey), and as he twangs his way into her heart, the movie's chief gag consists of an Italian suitor with a funny accent.—*M.A.* (Battery Park 16, 84th Street Sixplex, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Metro Cinema 1 and 2, 19th Street East 6, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, and Village East Cinemas.)

ALSO PLAYING

BEFORE NIGHT FALLS (1/8/01)
Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.

CAST AWAY (12/18/00)
Battery Park 16, Chelsea West, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Olympia I and II, Union Square, and Ziegfeld.

CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON (12/11/00)
Angelika Film Center, BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and 64th and 2nd.

THE HOUSE OF MIRTH (12/25/00 & 1/1/01)
Paris.

SHADOW OF THE VAMPIRE (1/15/01)
Battery Park 16, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, State, Union Square, and Waverly.

SIGNS & WONDERS
Quad Cinema.

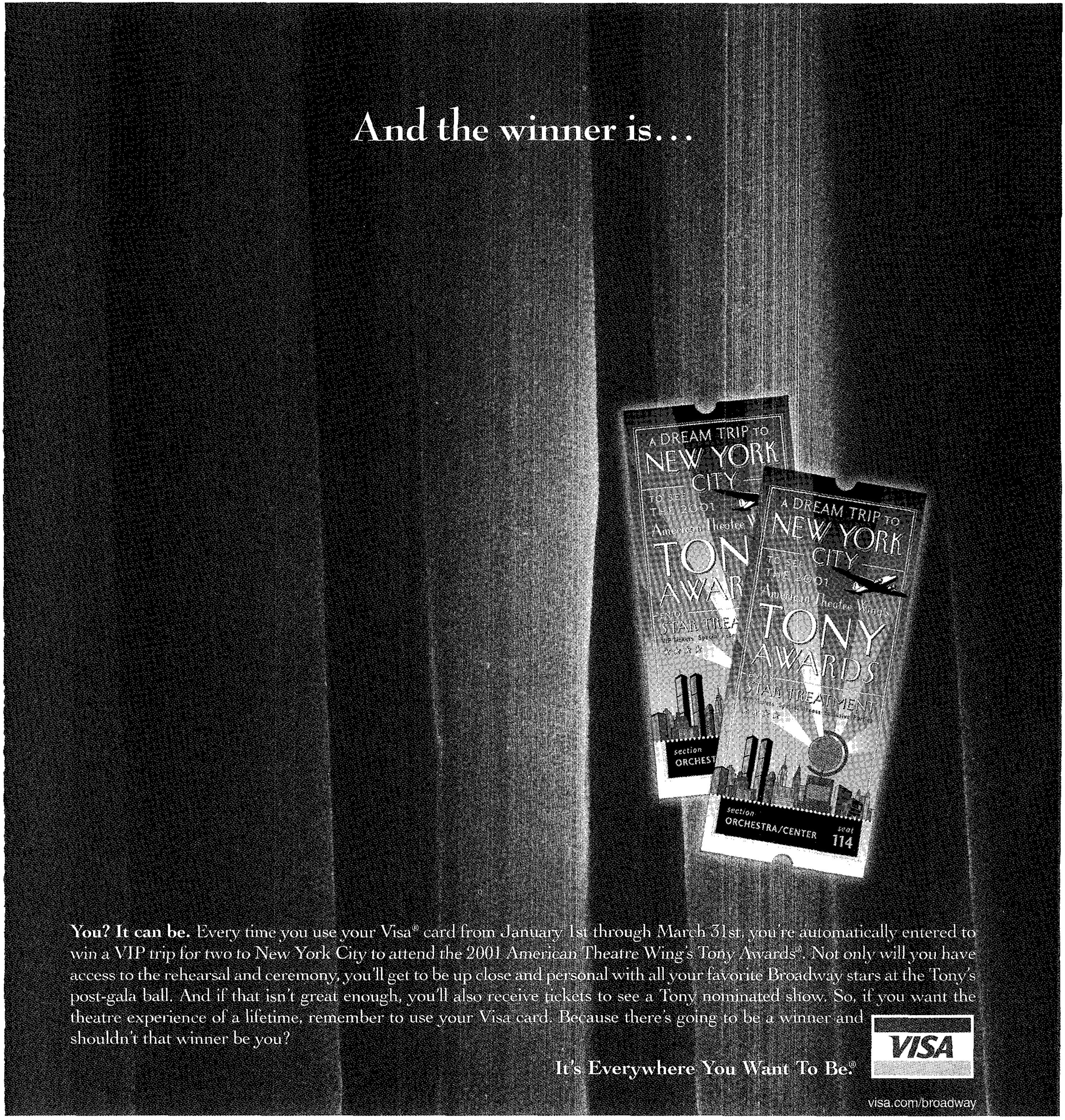
YI YI (A ONE AND A TWO) (1/8/01)
Cinema Village.

YOU CAN COUNT ON ME (12/18/00)
Empire 25, 59th Street East Cinema, 62nd & Broadway, and Village East Cinemas.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
BAM Rose Cinemas, 30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St. (945-3418).
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinema I, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema II, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema 3rd Avenue, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363).
Coronet Cinemas, Third Ave. at 59th St.



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To enter without a purchase or obligation, hand print your name, address, city, state, zip, day and evening phone numbers and the words "Visa/Broadway Sweepstakes" on a 3"x 5" card and mail in an envelope to: Visa/Broadway Sweepstakes, P.O. Box 4022, Grand Rapids, MN 55730-4022. Enter as often as you wish, but all entries must be mailed separately and not mechanically reproduced. All entries must be postmarked by 03/31/01 and received no later than 04/06/01. All entries become the property of the Sponsor and will not be returned. 2. Drawing: On or about April 14, 2001 a random drawing from all eligible entries (transactions and mail-ins) will be conducted under the direction of Marden-Kane, Inc. The prizes will be awarded. Only one prize per person or household. **3. Estimated Odds: Odds of winning are 1:520,000,000; however, odds of winning depend upon the total number of eligible entries received.** 4. 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Sponsor is not responsible for printing or typographical errors in any sweepstakes-related materials; for stolen, lost, late, misdirected, damaged, incomplete, illegible entries; or for transactions that are lost, misdirected, fail to enter into the processing system, or are processed, reported, or transmitted late or incorrectly or are lost for any reason including computer, telephone, paper transfer, or human error or electronic, computer, or telephonic malfunction or error. If in the Sponsor's opinion, there is any suspected or actual evidence of electronic or non-electronic tampering with any portion of the sweepstakes, or if computer virus, bugs, unauthorized intervention, fraud, or technical difficulties or failures compromise or corrupt or affect the administration, integrity, security, fairness, or proper conduct of the sweepstakes, the judges reserve the right at their sole discretion to disqualify any individual who tampers with the entry process and void any entries submitted fraudulently, to modify or suspend the sweepstakes, or to terminate the sweepstakes and conduct a random drawing to award the prizes using all non-suspect online and write-in entries received as of the termination date. 8. Who Won: For the names of the winners, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Visa/Broadway Sweepstakes winner, c/o Marden-Kane, Inc., P.O. Box 716, Sayreville, NJ 08871-0716. Requests must be received by April 30, 2001. 9. Sponsor: Visa U.S.A. 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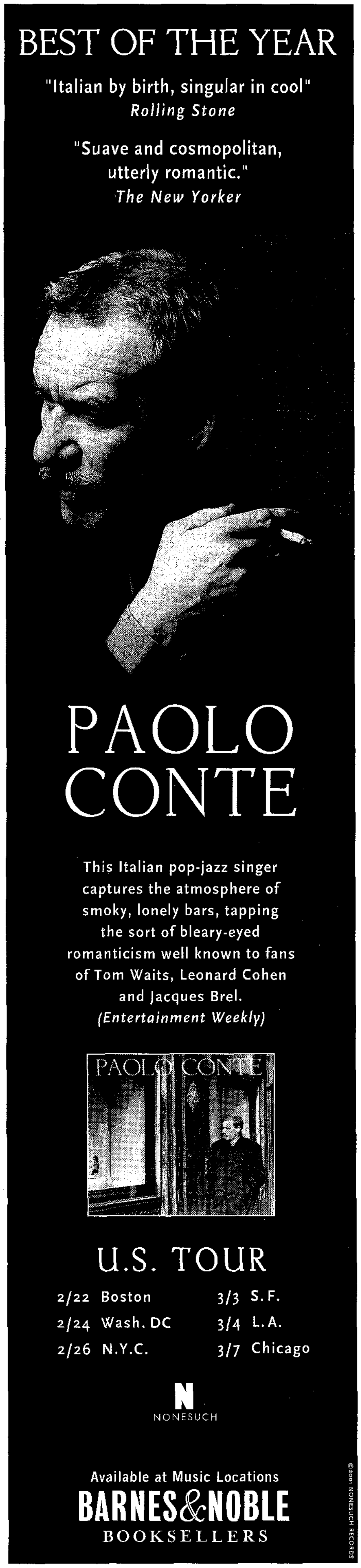

BEST OF THE YEAR

"Italian by birth, singular in cool"
Rolling Stone

"Suave and cosmopolitan, utterly romantic."
The New Yorker

PAOLO CONTE

This Italian pop-jazz singer captures the atmosphere of smoky, lonely bars, tapping the sort of bleary-eyed romanticism well known to fans of Tom Waits, Leonard Cohen and Jacques Brel.
(Entertainment Weekly)

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2/24 Wash. DC
2/26 N.Y.C.
3/3 S.F.
3/4 L.A.
3/7 Chicago

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East 85th Street, First Ave. at 85th St.
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
Film Forum, W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Gotham Cinema, Third Ave. at 58th St.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St.
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
Metro Cinema 1 and 2, Broadway at 99th St.
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 67th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Olympia I and II, Broadway at 107th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (688-3800).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th St.
Pioneer, 155 E. 3rd St. (254-3300).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
The Screening Room, 54 Varick St. (334-2100).
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
State, Broadway at 45th St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center (875-5600).
Waverly 1 and 2, Sixth Ave. at 3rd St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through March 4: Films selected by the New York Film Critics Circle. Feb. 17 at 2: "Manhunter" (1986, Michael Mann). ♦ Feb. 17 at 4:30: "My Man Godfrey" (1936, Gregory La Cava). ♦ Feb. 17 at 6:30: "Rules of the Game" (1939, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ Feb. 18 at 2: "The Heroic Trio" (1992, Johnny To; in Cantonese). ♦ Feb. 18 at 4:30: "Shoot the Piano Player" (1960, François Truffaut; in French). ♦ Feb. 24 at 2: "The Go-Between" (1971, Joseph Losey). ♦ Feb. 24 at 4:30: "The Girl from Chicago" (1932, Oscar Micheaux). ♦ Feb. 24 at 6:30: "Touch of Evil" (1958, Orson Welles). ♦ Feb. 25 at 2: "Céline and Julie Go Boating" (1974, Jacques Rivette; in French).

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5110)—Through March 1: "Without Borders: The Cinema of Amos Gitai." Feb. 23 at 7:30 and Feb. 27 at 9:30: "Esther" (1985; in Hebrew). ♦ Feb. 23 at 9:30 and Feb. 25 at 7:30: "Berlin-Jerusalem" (1989; in German). ♦ Feb. 24 at 4:15 and Feb. 28 at 7:30: "Field Diary" (1982; in Hebrew). ♦ Feb. 24 at 7:30 and Feb. 27 at 7:30: "Devarim" (1995; in Hebrew). ♦ Feb. 24 at 9:30: "Golem—The Spirit of Exile" (1991; in French). ♦ Feb. 25 at 9:30 and Feb. 28 at 9:30: "The Petrified Garden" (1993; in Hebrew). ♦ Feb. 26 at 9:30: "Kadosh" (1999; in Hebrew).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (777-3456)—Feb. 14 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Trouble in Paradise" (1932, Ernst Lubitsch). ♦ Feb. 15 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "The Story of a Three-Day Pass" (1968, Melvin Van Peebles; in French). ♦ Feb. 16 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:30: "Badlands" (1973, Terence Malick). ♦ Feb. 17 at 2 and 6:30: "Bad Lieutenant" (1992, Abel Ferrara). ♦ Feb. 17 at 4:30 and 9:30: "Homicide" (1991, David Mamet). ♦ Feb. 18 at 2 and 7: "Blue Steel" (1990, Kathryn Bigelow). ♦ Feb. 18 at 4:10 and 9:30: "Talk Radio" (1988, Oliver Stone). ♦ Feb. 19 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Criminal Lovers" (1999, François Ozon; in French). ♦ Feb. 20 at 4, 6:40, and 9:20: "Howards End" (1992, James Ivory). ♦ Feb. 21 at 6:45 and 9:30: "Odd Man Out" (1947, Carol Reed). ♦ Feb. 22 at 4:30, 6:30, and 9:10: "Bellyful" (2000, Van Peebles; in French). ♦ Feb. 23 at 4:30, 6:40, and 9:30: "True Stories" (1986, David Byrne). ♦ Feb. 24 at 2 and 7: "The Crow" (1994, Alex Proyas). ♦ Feb. 24 at 4 and 9:30: "Conan the Barbarian" (†). ♦ Feb. 25 at 2 and 6:40: "Sisters" (1973, Brian De Palma). ♦ Feb. 25 at 4 and 9:10: "Phantom of the Paradise" (†). ♦ Feb. 26 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Water Drops on Burning Rocks" (1999, François Ozon; in French). ♦ Feb. 27 at 5 and 8: "The Remains of the Day" (1993, James Ivory).

CINEMA CLASSICS

332 E. 11th St. (971-1015)—Through March 30: A celebration of the French New Wave. Feb. 15-18: "Kiss Me Deadly" (1955, Robert Aldrich). ♦ Feb. 19-20: "French Can-Can" (1955, Jean Renoir; in French). ♦ Feb. 21-22: "Pickpocket" (1959, Robert Bresson; in French). ♦ Feb. 23-25: "Breathless" (1959, Jean-Luc Godard; in French). ♦ Feb. 26-27: "Les Cousins" (1965, Claude Chabrol; in French).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (727-8110)—Through March 15, an Eric Rohmer retrospective. All films are in French. Feb. 14 at 1, 2:45, 4:30, 6:15, 8, and 9:45: "La Collectionneuse" (1967). ♦ Feb. 15 at 2, 5:45, and 9:30: "The Girl at the Monceau Bakery" (1963) and "Suzanne's Career" (1963). ♦ Feb. 15 at 3:30 and 7:15: "The Sign of Leo" (1959). ♦ Feb. 16-18 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "The Marquise of O" (1976). ♦ Feb. 20-21 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "The Aviator's Wife" (1981). ♦ Feb. 22 at 3:30 and 7:30: "The Tree, the Mayor, and the Médiathèque" (1993). ♦ Feb. 23-25 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "Claire's Knee" (1970). ♦ Feb. 27 at 2, 4, 6, 8, and 10: "Le Beau Mariage" (1982).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—Through March 27: "New Directions in French Film." Feb. 20 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "The Dreamlife of Angels" (1999, Erick Zonca; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—Through Feb. 23: A tenth-anniversary celebration of the production company Good Machine. Feb. 15 at 2:30 and Feb. 19 at 5: "Happiness" (1998, Todd Solondz). ♦ Feb. 15 at 6 and Feb. 19 at 2: "Walking and Talking" (1996, Nicole Holofcener). ♦ Feb. 16 at 2:30: "Pushing Hands" (1992, Ang Lee; in Taiwanese). ♦ Feb. 16 at 6 and Feb. 18 at 5: "The Wedding Banquet" (1993, Lee; in Taiwanese). ♦ Feb. 16 at 8 and Feb. 18 at 2: "Ride with the Devil" (1999, Lee). ♦ Feb. 17 at 2 and Feb. 20 at 6: "The Brothers McMullen" (1995, Edward Burns). ♦ Feb. 17 at 5 and Feb. 23 at 2:30: "The Golden Boat" (1990, Raoul Ruiz). ♦ Feb. 22 at 2:30 and Feb. 23 at 6: "The Sticky Fingers of Time" (1997, Hilary Brougher). ♦ Feb. 20 at 2:30 and Feb. 23 at 8: Three short films by Hal Hartley (1989-91). ♦ Feb. 23 at 1, 3, 6, and 7:30; Feb. 24 at 1, 2:30, 4, and 5:30; and Feb. 27 at 3 and 6: "The Old Place" (1999, Anne-Marie Miéville and Jean-Luc Godard; in French).

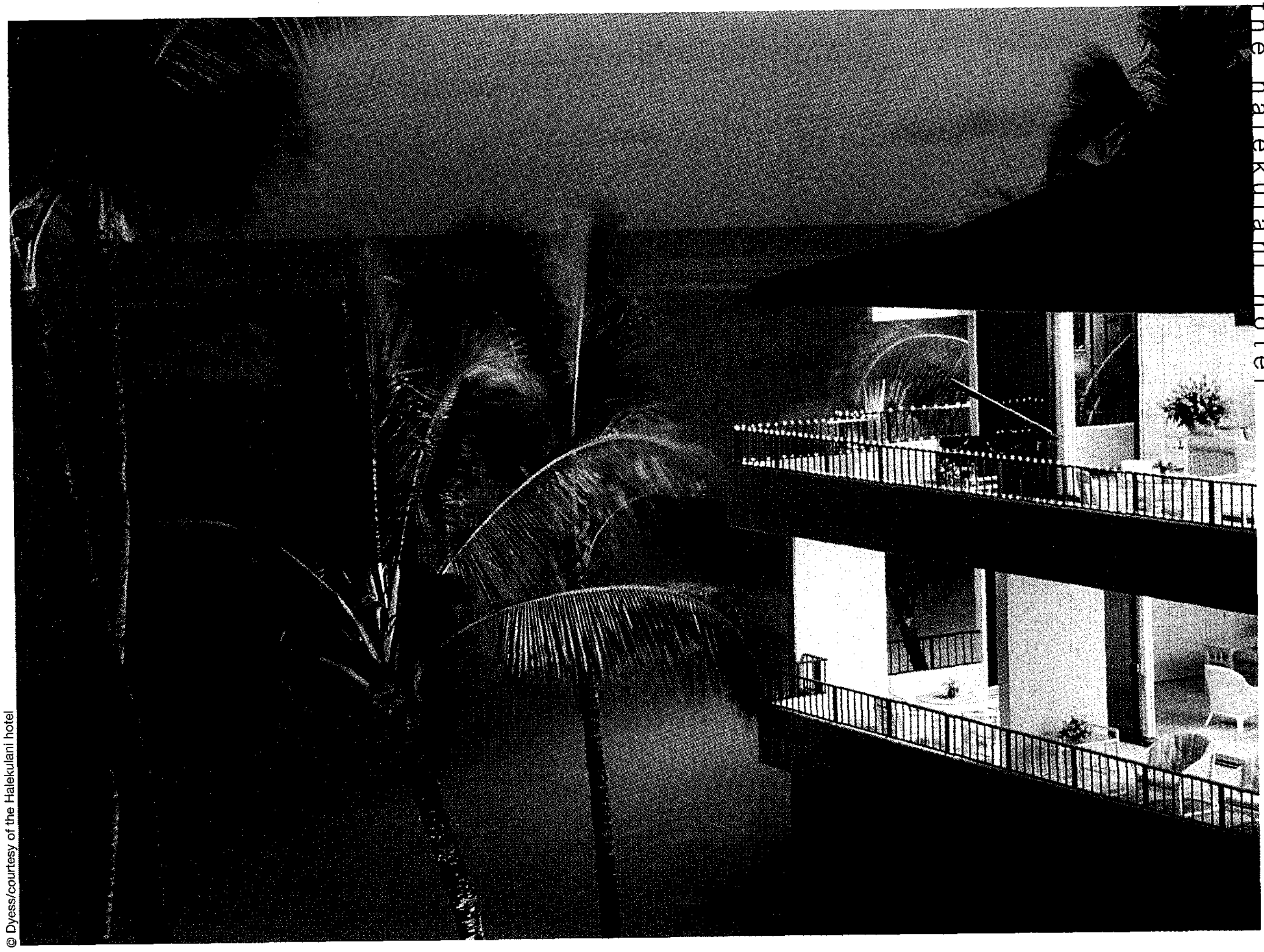
THE SCREENING ROOM

54 Varick St. (334-2100)—Through March 23: A Ridley Scott retrospective. Feb. 23: "Alien" (1979). ♦ Feb. 24: "Blade Runner—The Director's Cut" (1982). ♦ Feb. 25: "Thelma and Louise" (1991). ♦ Feb. 26: "Black Rain" (1989). ♦ Feb. 27: "Legend" (1985). ♦ Feb. 28: "The Duellists" (1977).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (875-5600)—Movies for kids. Feb. 17-18 at 12:30: "Dragonheart" (1996, Rob Cohen). ♦ Feb. 19-21: "The Lost World" (†). ♦ Feb. 22-23 at 1: "Gertie's Children" (compilation, John Canemaker). ♦ Feb. 24-25 at 2: "Legend" (†). ♦ Feb. 16-22: "Six Days of Slovak Cinema." ♦ Through March 8: "The Urban Generation: Chinese Cinema in Transformation." Feb. 23 at 3:30 and 7:30 and Feb. 25 at 4:15 and 8:30: "Rainclouds Over Wushan" (1996, Zhang Ming; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 23 at 5:30 and 9:30, Feb. 24 at 6:30, and Feb. 27 at 2 and 6:15: "Postman" (1995, He Jianjun; in Mandarin). ♦ Feb. 24 at 4:15 and 8:40, Feb. 25 at 6:15, and Feb. 27 at 4 and 8:15: "Xiao Wu" (1997, Jia Zhang Ke; in Mandarin).

ARRIVING: the halekulani hotel



© Dyess/courtesy of the Halekulani hotel

the 'house befitting heaven'

by richard john pietschmann

Classic mystery novel buffs will recognize "House Without A Key" as the title of Earl Derr Bigger's first Charlie Chan novel, published in 1925. The small pavilion that provided the setting for the novel still exists at the Halekulani hotel in Honolulu, where I have stayed more than a dozen times. Still, I do not return for the history of the place. I come instead for the carefully restored pavilion's broad expanse of terrace overlooking the sea and Waikiki Beach, and for lovingly played local music, artfully danced hula, and the Halekulani's rippingly good mai tais.

Every night, under a century-old *kaiwe* tree on the oceanfront, a trio of guitarists plays gentle *hapa haole* tunes like "Waikiki" and "Lei of Stars," while Kanoe Miller, a former Miss Hawaii, sways in a graceful, barefoot hula. Mind you, I have no particular love for fruity rum drinks, with or without those tiny paper umbrellas; nor am I much of a Hawaiian music aficionado. But such things seem neither corny nor kitsch here. They are as natural and indispensable as a carriage ride in Central Park during a visit to Gotham. I stay at the Halekulani because it's the kind of authentic Hawaiian experience difficult to duplicate.

From the moment I arrive, I feel rather pleasantly disoriented. The front desk is open to the trade winds, and balmy breezes sweep through the ikebana-accented lobby as the hotel manager immediately escorts me to my room. Upon entry, I slide open the plantation shutters and step outside to the lanai for the picture postcard view. The sweep of Waikiki Beach, the surfers on Mamala Bay, and the silhouette of the ancient crater of Diamond Head are spread before me. If it's after 5:30 P.M., lilting Hawaiian melodies float up from below as I leisurely sit down at my desk to register. The hotel, a member of The Leading Hotels of the World, exudes a civilized commitment to guest indulgence that underscores its Hawaiian name, "House Befitting Heaven."

courtesy of the Halekulani hotel

Unbiased observers readily agree that the Halekulani is the best hotel in Hawaii. Once a modest collection of guest cottages in the early part of the century, it has now become the epitome of the tropical resort hotel—an oasis of style and tranquility in the midst of an urban setting. With six structures of varying heights set back from the sea and cleverly spread over a five-acre site, the hotel seems to turn its back on hectic Waikiki, almost as if it exists somewhere else in time. Myriad courtyards, patios, and terraces all contribute to the uncrowded feel, and guests are constantly surprised to learn that there are 456 rooms. The ingenious architecture that reinvented the hotel in 1984 makes it seem much smaller, even intimate.

Although there's a portion of famous Waikiki beach out front, itself very nearly private, many guests elect to sun themselves on the spacious deck surrounding the hotel's stunning eighty-two foot elliptical swimming pool. Its floor is composed in part of more than one million glass mosaic tiles depicting the hotel's signature cattleya orchid. Guest rooms, decorated in serene shades of cream, and which come equipped with slippers and sunscreen, appear deceptively simple. But the supremely comfortable beds, first-class furniture, and white-tiled baths with separate soaking tubs are anything but ordinary. And then there are those large, fully furnished lanais that seem so much a part of the Hawaiian experience.

But it gets even better. There's an impressive level of culture in Honolulu, largely a legacy of wealthy plantation families who were eager patrons of the arts. Honolulu is enjoying a growing reputation as a musical destination, and the Halekulani is providing complimentary tickets to the Honolulu Symphony, Hawaii Opera Theatre, as well as Honolulu Academy of Arts, Contemporary Museum, Bishop Museum, and Iolani Palace. The Honolulu Symphony is the oldest U.S. symphony orchestra west of the Rockies, and it performs in the spectacularly modern Neal S. Blaisdell Concert Hall. Led by music director Samuel Wong (also a conductor of the Hong Kong Philharmonic), the orchestra attracts top guest soloists. This season's remaining concerts will include Grammy-winning singer and pianist Diana Krall in a program with the Honolulu Pops (April 13–14), pianist Vladimir Feltsman in a Prokofiev program (May 13th

Steve Murray/courtesy of the Halekulani hotel

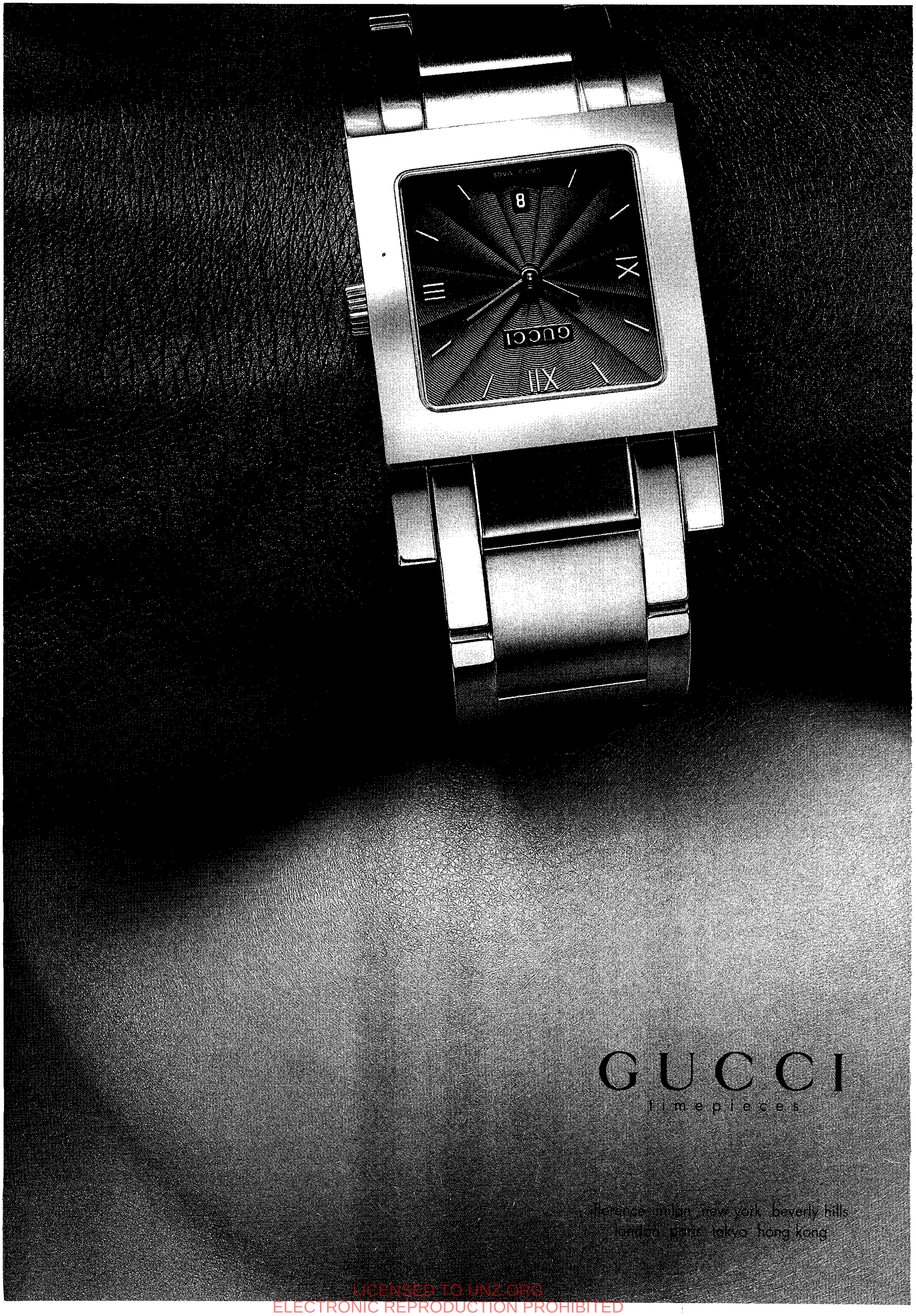
and 15th), and pianist Misha Dichter in a program devoted to Tchaikovsky (May 27th and 29th).

If all that culture-seeking produces an appetite, the Halekulani features no less than three long-playing local hits—distinctive restaurants that are, quite simply, the best in Waikiki. The casual House Without A Key, open all day, specializes in simple but superb fare made with the freshest ingredients. The elegant, open-air Orchids features Asian-accented specialties such as *opakapaka* (local pink snapper) with wasabi mashed potatoes. And the Halekulani's incomparable La Mer (open only for dinner) lives up to its reputation with a wide selection of delicious seafood and a renowned wine list. The thoroughly French and Michelin-honored Yves Garnier, who was formerly *chef de cuisine* at La Coupole and Maona in Monte Carlo, is in charge here, producing meals that measure up to the finest anywhere. And, while you partake of a starter of, say, tartares of *hamachi, ahi,* and salmon with three caviars and three coulis, you'll also have the best dinner view in Waikiki.

A final piece of advice: It has become practically a tradition for guests at the Halekulani to dine at least once on their own private lanai. You can arrange a feast with as many courses as you like through room service. And if you plan the affair so that it occurs before the trio packs up (around 8:30 P.M.), you'll be dining to the evocative strains of Hawaiian music as well.

(Los Angeles-based Richard John Pietschmann has contributed to Travel & Leisure, Departures, *and* Bon Appétit.*)*

For reservations and information, contact
the Halekulani hotel at **800-367-2343**,
or visit **www.halekulani.com**.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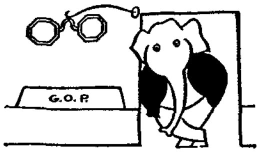
THE
NEW YORKER

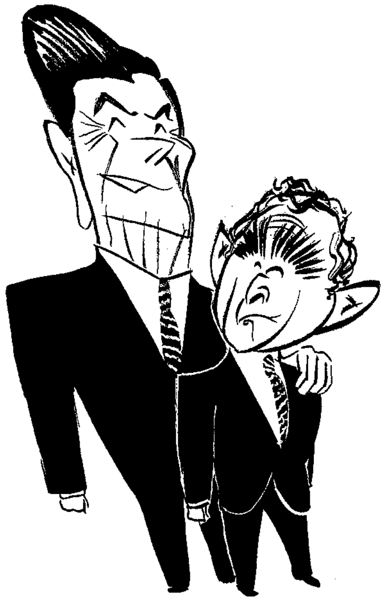
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
MEMORY LANE



Ronald Reagan entered his tenth decade of life last week, but he did not celebrate his ninetieth birthday. The progressive memory loss that attends late-stage Alzheimer's deprived him of that pleasure, while at the same time protecting him from any consciousness that he was missing it. As long as the patient is kindly cared for, Alzheimer's is often less terrible for him than for those who have been closest to him. In a pre-birthday interview with Tom Brokaw, Nancy Reagan said that her husband, despite his condition, "is unfailingly polite and sweet." But she could not hide her sadness, and responded a little mechanically to Brokaw's cautiously chipper cues. (Brokaw: "The love affair goes on." Mrs. Reagan: "The love affair goes on.") When Brokaw gently asked Mrs. Reagan what her husband remembers about his life, she replied, "Every once in a while, he'll talk about Moon, his brother, and his mother, Nelle, and Jack"—his father. "That's about all now."

Washington, however, has no trouble remembering that there was once a President Reagan, especially now that there is once again a President Bush. Many of that city's corps of commentators last week marked the old President's birthday by likening him to the new one. In the *Wall Street Journal*, the columnist Gerald F. Seib summarized the prevailing wisdom: like Ronald Reagan, George W. Bush succeeds "a highly intelligent but congenitally hands-on Democratic president"; brings to the White House a "management style" that is contrastingly "detached"; has devoted his first weeks in office to "a personal charm offensive with his Democratic foes"; and is blessed with opponents who, "dismissive of his skill and intelligence," run the risk of underestimating him. In addition, Seib noted, both Reagan and young Bush offered "tax-cut plans so ambitious that they were seen at the outset as unrealistic, and potentially dangerous," yet quickly went "from being questionable to seeming almost inevitable." (An adjoining news story noted that under the Bush plan Bush himself would pocket—on the basis of his 1999 return, the most recent available—somewhere between twenty thousand and sixty thousand dollars, while his Vice-President, Dick Cheney, would reap a bonanza of at least a quarter of a million. A taxpayer in the middle bracket would save a yearly average of four hundred and fifty-three dollars.)


Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush

Last week provided a reminder that George W. Bush is no Ronald Reagan, in the form of a new book, "Reagan, in His Own Hand." The book consists mostly of several hundred five-minute radio addresses that Reagan gave during the late nineteen-seventies, all evidently written by Reagan himself. The book does not demand a reconsideration of the widespread view that Reagan, as President, was ill-informed, inattentive, and often unaware of the consequences, and even the content, of his own policies. But the scripts are very good of their kind. One needn't agree with Reagan's denunciations of the Helsinki Accords, the minimum wage, and the banning of DDT to appreciate the consistency of his views and the skill with which he softened their presentation. (After relating an anecdote about an elaborate food-stamp scam perpetrated by a California college student, he concludes, "I didn't know whether to stop what he was doing or hire him as state finance director.") Reagan's opinions were his own, arrived at in the course of

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

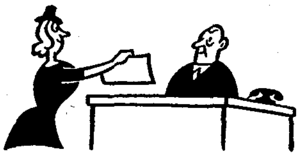
decades as a trade-union official, corporate motivational speaker, and public official. They, like his political career, were not an inheritance.

There is another difference between the two men, and this one is not personal. It is worth keeping in mind—indeed, it is worth harping on—that our forty-third President holds office only because a judicial order stifled the vote count in a decisive state, thereby letting stand a preliminary total that was incomplete, distorted by irregularities, at odds with the will of the national electorate, and almost certainly wrong in its outcome. Reagan, on the other hand, was elected—and by an outright popular majority. And, when he ran again, he received a larger absolute number of votes than any other candidate in American history. (The runner-up is Al Gore, a visiting professor of journalism at Columbia University.)

Inducing forgetfulness about these uncomfortable truths, quite as much as soliciting support for tax relief for the comfortable, has been the goal of the opening weeks of Bush II. Some conservatives, accordingly, are adopting the vocabulary of erasure. On Reagan's birthday, the anti-tax firebrand Grover Norquist was busy promoting his latest Reagan-related project. (His last one was the successful effort to rename Washington National Airport Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport. It used to be unusual, except in places like Stalingrad and Ciudad Trujillo, for important localities to be named after living politicians.) Norquist wants to replace the portrait of Alexander Hamilton on the ten-dollar bill with a portrait of Reagan. "Hamilton was a great American," Norquist jauntily told the *Times*. "But it's time to move on."

—*Hendrik Hertzberg*

CULTURAL POLITICS
WELCOME TO LINCOLN CENTER



At the turn of 2001, several days after Gordon J. Davis started as president of Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, he stayed in his new office late, unpacking boxes and hanging photos and mementos on the wall. This was his first paid L.C. job after twenty-one pro-bono years of fund-raising and board-membering and, among other things, developing and overseeing Jazz at Lincoln Center. Very softly, in a corner, a recording of Bessie Smith singing "Backwater Blues" was playing.

"My mother always said I'd be president, so here I am, the president," Davis said with a laugh. He is a youthful-looking dark-haired man of fifty-nine who stands six-five-and-a-half. He had on a tweed jacket over a shirt that was open at the collar.

He put up a photo of a laughing Duke Ellington with a trumpet-holding Louis Armstrong. It was captioned "I believe that music is neither new nor old." He put up a framed sheet of twenty-nine-cent Black Heritage 1994-issue postage stamps bearing a portrait of the late Dr. Allison Davis.

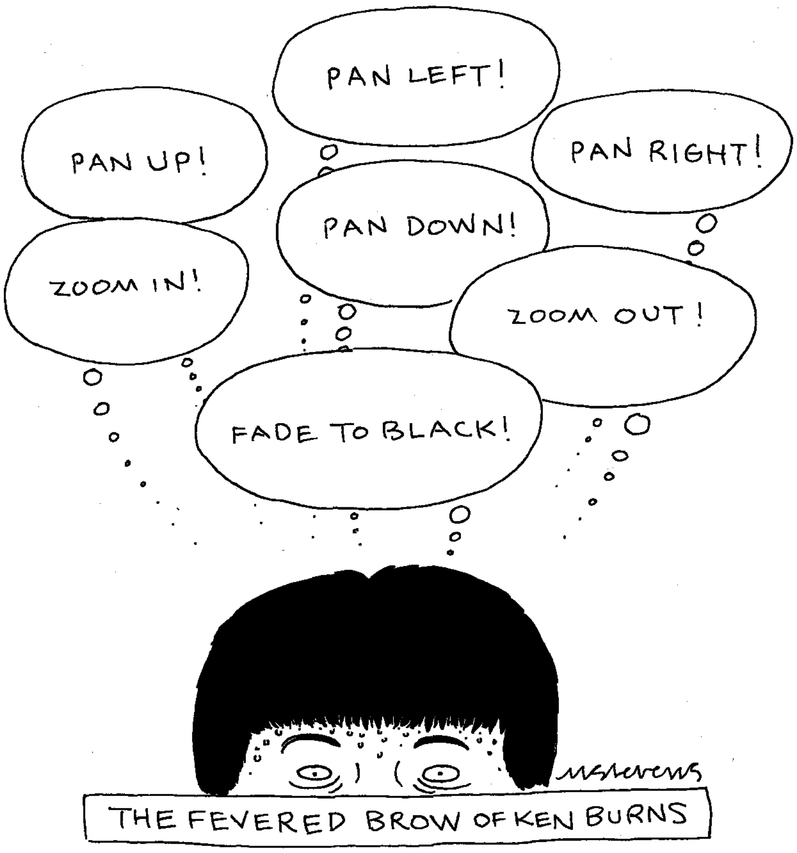
"That's my father—his stamp," Davis said cheerfully. "He was the John Dewey Distinguished Service Professor of Education at the University of Chicago. He and Ellington had a lot in common. Both grew up in Washington, D.C. Both were intelligent. Both were elegant dressers. My father wore a three-piece suit to the beach."

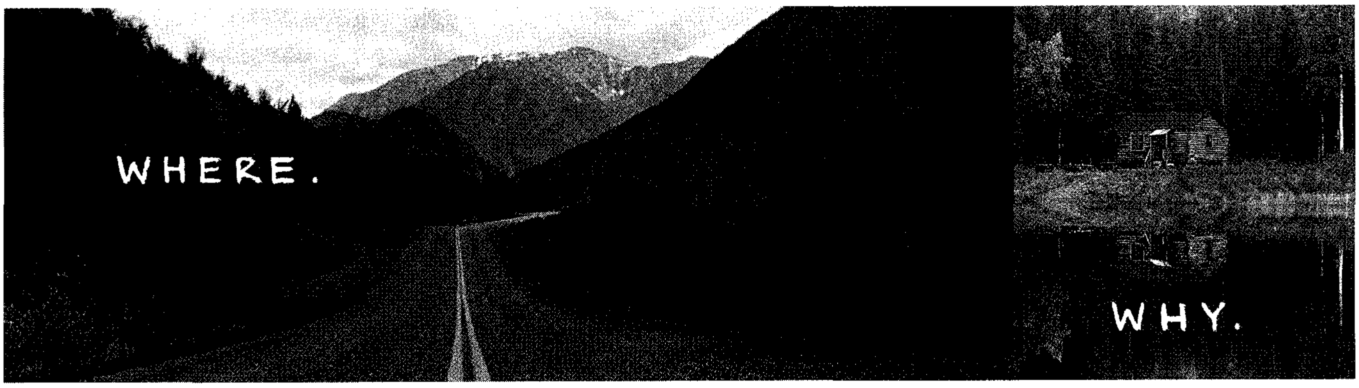
He picked up a beat-up long-playing record album, the cover of which bore a photograph of the jazz pianist John Lewis and the three other members of the famous Modern Jazz Quartet: Percy Heath (bass), Milt Jackson (vibraphone), and Connie Kay (drums). "Look at them," Davis said, smoothing the old album with the palm of his hand. "Those elegant suits! When we were kids, we all wanted to look like them, to dress like them, to be them. That picture must have been taken in the middle or late nineteen-fifties—I'll have to ask John Lewis. He's eighty now. He's giving a concert here, playing his own compositions in a duet with Wynton Marsalis, and he'll conduct another of his compositions with the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra. But I may not be able to make it. I have to go to meetings and dinners and all this other stuff now."

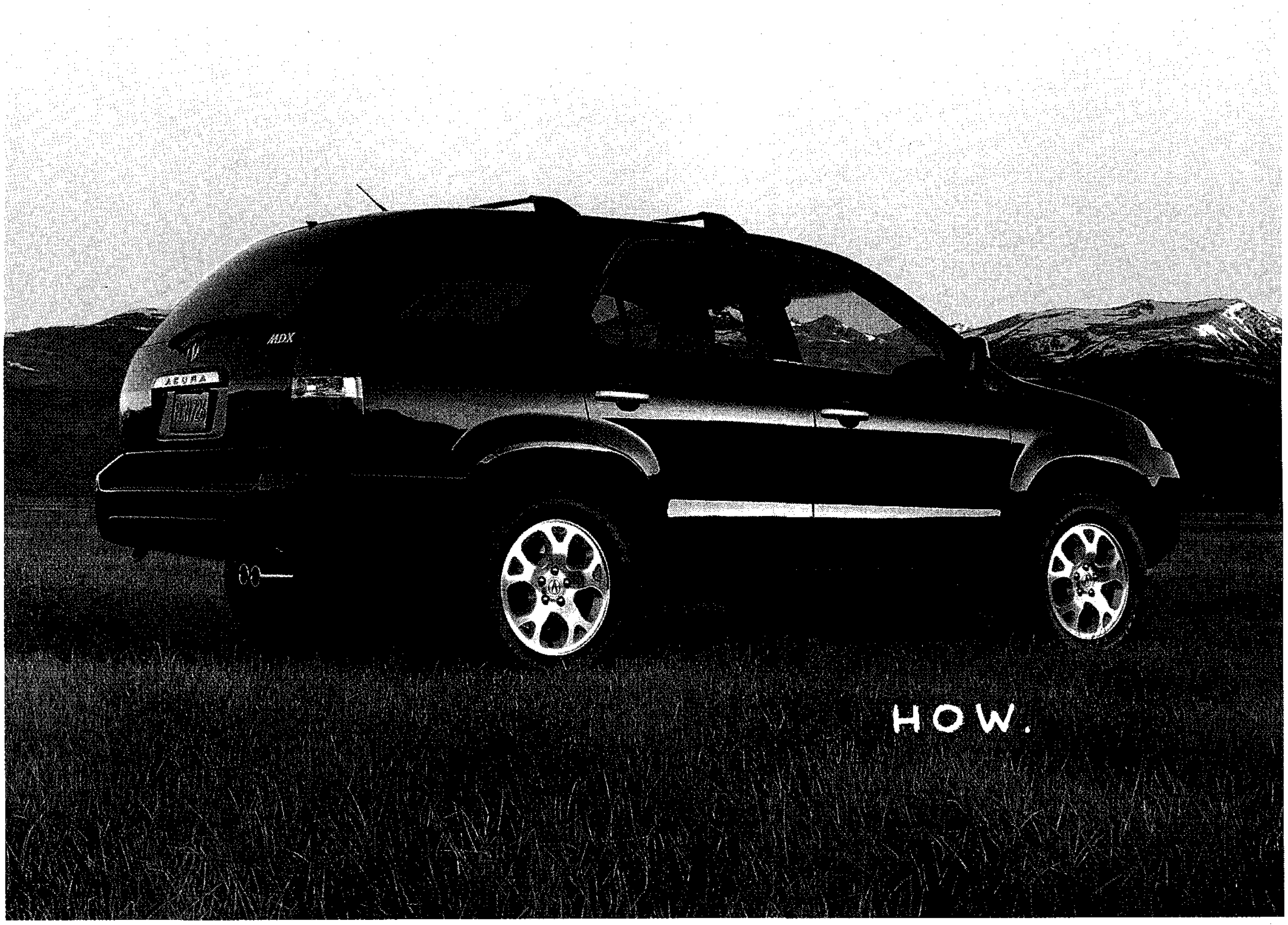
His assistant, a jolly red-haired woman named Karol, came in and handed him a bunch of papers.

"To be signed," she said, with enormous enthusiasm.

Davis squinted at the top paper and, putting on tortoiseshell-rimmed eyeglasses, squinted again.


PAN LEFT!
PAN UP!
PAN RIGHT!
PAN DOWN!
ZOOM IN!
ZOOM OUT!
FADE TO BLACK!
THE FEVERED BROW OF KEN BURNS





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"Are you sure, Karol?" he asked, reading aloud: "Two hundred and twelve thousand?"

"Two hundred and twelve thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight dollars and sixty-nine cents," she said firmly and happily. "Made out to the New York Philharmonic."

Davis signed the check.

"Two days before I started working here, we had that big snowstorm," he said. "I looked out the window. I started wondering about the heating, the ventilation system. If they suddenly went out, what would happen? Before I knew it, I was going down to see the Central Mechanical Plant. Down, down, four stories down under the reflecting pool out there on the plaza. I felt like Alice in Wonderland. What a beautiful sight! Nearly forty years old, and it was white-glove clean. Beautiful.

"There's so much here, and I don't know how it all works. I've got to familiarize myself with everything and everybody. I have to tell people, 'I don't *know*. I just *got* here.' I've seen everything in the Met Opera, all the sets, several stories' worth. I went to see 'Il Trovatore' the other night with Beverly Sills, my chairman. There I was, sitting in the Lincoln Center box, knowing that I was missing a program about Louis Armstrong on television. Then I realized something important: there's an essential *connection* between the two."

Three weeks later, Davis stood at his desk wearing a pin-striped blue suit that seemed to contain him with difficulty. He looked slightly frazzled. He was still trying to get to know everybody and had just managed to meet all the ushers at Avery Fisher Hall. Shortly after Davis started his new job, a ten-year, one-and-a-half-billion-dollar redevelopment plan for Lincoln Center was announced. He had been having meeting after meeting with Beverly Sills and Mayor Giuliani and the architects and master planners and the fifteen-member board of the Lincoln Center Constituent Development Project. The city had just promised to contribute $240 million. Then the president and the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera caused a big commotion by threatening to withdraw from the project unless the opera was allowed to become more involved in the planning.

"None of this came as a complete surprise," Davis said, referring to the Met's protest. "There are always issues in public service. When I started working for Mayor Lindsay, in 1968, we were hit with the school strikes. When we were creating the Central Park Conservancy, in the late 1970s, there was issue after issue and compromise after compromise. I love the pressure. We've drawn up a collegial but firm reply to the Met. These aren't problems. We'll work it out. I've been training for this all my life."

Just then, Beverly Sills popped in for one of her impromptu meetings with Davis. She seemed sunny and completely at ease, and told him reassuringly, "You have no idea. This place is divided into a million parts."

"I'm finding that out," Davis said.

Sills smiled. She told Davis that she thought they might invite the Met's board members, as well as those of Lincoln Center's other constituents, to attend one of the presentations on the architects' master plan. Davis agreed. Then she asked him if he would sit with her at the Met to see the opera "Manon."

"That's a long one," he said. "You call it the French 'Götterdämmerung.' "

"I'll put on my jammies and slippers and take a sandwich and stay to the end," Sills said.

"I'd love to come," Davis said. "At this point, *you* can wear anything you like."

—Lillian Ross

THE MUSICAL LIFE
SMOKY MOUNTAIN GIRL

"Oh, we had our problems, but it was fun." This could have been said by any number of people on just about any day about any number of things, but in this case it was said by Dolly Parton on a recent Friday morning in a hotel room in the West Fifties, about a show she and her band did at Joe's Pub a couple of nights earlier. She emphasized the word "fun," which, the way she says it, in her eastern-Tennessee mountain accent, verges on two syllables. Parton had come up on her bus from her home, in Nashville, to spend twelve days promoting her new bluegrass album, "Little Sparrow." In a couple of hours, she would be heading home again. The only hitch noticeable to the audience at the show was that, between "Train, Train" and "Muleskinner Blues," Parton knocked over a full bottle of water that was perched on a nearby stand. But, the way she saw it, "we had technical problems up front, we were late gettin' on, and then I go out and knock all the water over—I said, 'Well, my water broke. I hope I can deliver!' " And, she said, "I kept messing stuff up," by which she meant that she forgot a few lyrics here and there. Not that anyone cared—Parton singing the wrong words is still Parton singing.

Dolly Parton

The Joe's Pub show was an intimate one, with some audience members sitting close enough to reach over and touch Parton's sparkly red-and-silver high-heeled mules if they wanted to, or even the hem of her sparkly red-and-silver dress. The low-key club setting, and the casual, anti-Vegas nature of the evening—she hadn't even had much of a chance to rehearse with her band that day—was a departure for her, but she felt comfortable with it. (In a variation on the old Carnegie Hall joke, she said to the crowd, "How do you get to Joe's Pub? Don't practice.") "After so many years in the business, you think you have to have a show, but sometimes your best show is no show, and just being natural," she said. "And, with this music, that was what fit. It felt right, it felt good, like it used to always be in the early days, before I had any of the other tricks and the glamour and all that."

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Almost all the musicians who accompanied her on "Little Sparrow" (and on its 1999 predecessor and close cousin, "The Grass Is Blue") were with her that night—every one of them a tall stalk in his own right in the bluegrass world—and two backup singers were there as well, making a total of ten people on a stage that was roughly the size of two twin beds pushed together. But they all appeared relaxed and happy to be together: whenever someone took a solo, everyone in the band smiled. "It's a good thing you like each other if you gotta work that close," Parton said, and then laughed her high, pinging-crystal laugh.

Along with the songs on her new album, Parton sang some of her classics, such as "I Will Always Love You," which Whitney Houston made famous as a ghastly, all-wrong power ballad, and which Parton sings with a sad and quiet sweetness, and the sublime "Coat of Many Colors," which she dedicated to everyone's mama. After that, she decided, on the spur of the moment, to sing "Smoky Mountain Memories," in honor of her father, Lee Parton, who died in November, and to whom "Little Sparrow" is dedicated.

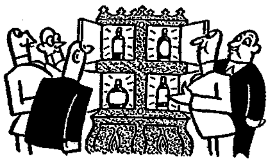
In her hotel room, Parton explained why she has made the move away from more obviously commercial music and reconnected with the music of her youth. She had reached a stage in her career where she not only could but also had to call her own shots; she was doing well financially, but, as invariably happens to older artists (Parton is fifty-five), she wasn't being played on the radio anymore. When the last label she was on went under, she said, "I went back home to my old home place, fasted for two weeks, and prayed about what I wanted to do with my life and with my career." She concluded that she was going to record exactly what she wanted to record. It helped that she had a producer she liked and trusted—Steve Buckingham, who was an A & R executive at Columbia Records when she was on that label and has been producing her for twelve years. (Buckingham also plays dulcimer and Autoharp on "Little Sparrow.")

Parton said that she was already coming up with more ideas for rootsy songs along lines similar to the ones on her last two records: "I woke up at two-thirty this morning writing a gospel song for my next album, about a Holy Roller woman preacher. I thought it would be perfect—I had an aunt that was a preacher." Her family and her early home came into the conversation several times. She said, "The reason I've stayed sane through the years in the business is because I've never lost home. I always just close my eyes and I'm home. I think of home every day," and she added, "My natural thing to do, even if I'm just in a motel room or a suite, or a cottage somewhere, is to sing those old songs that Mama used to sing from my little childhood." And Parton, with her bluegrass albums, seems to have gone back home in a profound way. "This is the music that I loved, that I came out of the Smoky Mountains singing. This is 'Coat of Many Colors.' This is 'My Tennessee Mountain Home.' If I could have made a living, and still had the career, doing this kind of music, I would have done that. I had to get rich in order to afford to sing like I was poor again. Isn't that a hell of a note?"

—Nancy Franklin

POSTCARD FROM FLORENCE

HANNIBAL'S HOSTS



In Ridley Scott's movie "Hannibal," the title character, Dr. Hannibal Lecter, serves as the curator of a grand fifteenth-century house in Florence called the Palazzo Capponi. One cold morning recently, the palazzo's real curator, Count Niccolò Piero Uberto Ferrante Galgano Gaspare Calcedonio Capponi, entertained a visitor with stories about the week, last May, when Scott and his crew took over the Capponi home.

The Count led the way into the library, and, seating himself on a metal step stool, he took out his pipe. His wife, the Countess Ross, joined him. "This is the desk where Hannibal writes his letter to Clarice," he said, gesturing at a seventeenth-century worktable. The Count is about forty, burly, with curly brown hair, a Vandyke beard, and a pair of schoolboy ears. He holds a doctorate in military history and teaches at the Florentine campus of New York University. He speaks a perfect, Wodehousian English, which, he explains, was preserved in his family and passed down, like an heirloom, from mother to son. The Countess Ross is American: witty, crisp, and, as the Count says, "formidable."

The Count: "We had Ridley Scott in here with his cigar."

The Countess: "The group would arrive, led by the cigar, followed by Ridley, followed by a crowd of quiet and attentive people."

The Count: "They tell me the bigger the movie's budget, the bigger the cigar. It created quite a bit of smoke."

The Countess: "There was a lot of fake smoke, actually. Ridley seems to be obsessed with smoke and busts."

The Count: "He wanted more busts in the *gran salone*, so he ordered up some papier-mâché busts that were made to look old. But they wouldn't do. So I said that I had a few of my ancestors down in the basement, shall I bring them up? He said marvellous. They were quite dirty, so I asked him, 'Shall we dust them?' 'Oh, no,' he said. 'Please, don't.' One of them was my *quadrisnonna*, my great-great-great-grandmother, born Luisa Velluti-Zati, of the Dukes of San Clemente, who, according to family legend, was a very proper woman. She refused to attend the theatre—she thought it was immoral. Now she is appearing as a prop in a movie. And what a movie! Violence, disembowelment, cannibalism. Oh, dear."

"You never know, she might be pleased," the Countess said.

The Count consulted his watch, then apologized. "I'm not being discourteous. I myself smoke after twelve and after seven." It was three minutes to twelve.

"Aside from smoke and busts, Ridley was fascinated with Henry VIII," he went on. "I showed him our letter." He rose from his perch and removed a canvas fascicle from a shelf. Inside was a letter to his grandfather, many times great, from Henry VIII, requesting that the said ancestor supply two thousand soldiers and as many harquebusiers for Henry's army as possible. The letter was signed by Henry, and from the document dangled something brown and waxy, about the size of a squashed fig.

The Count explained, "That is Henry VIII's broad seal. Ridley quipped that it looked rather more like Henry's left testicle. I made a photocopy for him. Of the document, I mean."

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Suddenly, there was a wail from a distant room in the palazzo, and the Countess bustled off.

As he moved on to the *gran salone*, the room where Hannibal plays the grand piano, the Count gestured at some of the decorations. "Most of these are reproductions," he said. "But this suit over here, this is a good suit of armor. It dates from the fifteen-eighties. It once fit me well. It's quite light. I could do push-ups in it."

The Countess reappeared with a baby, Francesca, named after Francesca Capponi, a great beauty of the sixteenth century, who married Vieri di Cambio de' Medici.

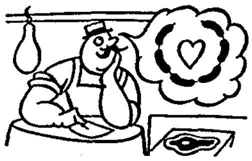
The group moved into the *sala rossa*, and the Countess told a story about the shoot. "Every day while they were filming, Niccolò's little brother, Sebastiano, who runs the family estate in Chianti, brought up a bottle of the estate's wine, and he would place it in a strategic location in this room. But it never managed to get into the picture. This prop woman kept moving it out. Apparently, they only liked to show Seagram brands."

The Count smiled, and said, "Nevertheless, by the end of the day the bottle had always managed to get itself uncorked and emptied."

—*Douglas Preston*

THE MESS HALL

ALL YOU CAN HOLD FOR EIGHTY-FIVE BUCKS



One night last week, as the European Commission was preparing to issue its latest bulletin on the Old World's mad-cow scare (a proposal that would effectively ban the sale of T-bone steaks in ten countries), a hundred and seventy New Yorkers gathered at the Beacon restaurant, on West Fifty-sixth Street, in the New World, to wolf down a meal whose centerpiece was more than three hundred and sixty pounds of steak. The event was billed as the restaurant's "first annual Beefsteak," in honor of a fearless, all-male rite of gluttony that flourished in the city's lodges, political clubs, and labor halls back in the years when nobody had ever heard of things like "cholesterol count" or "fat percentage," let alone a brain-wasting disease called BSE, for bovine spongiform encephalopathy.

"I love steak," David Emil, the co-owner of Beacon, said as he watched the beefeaters arrive at his three-tiered, handsomely modernistic establishment. They headed straight for the bar, where the night's principal libation—beer—awaited them in pitchers. ("Brewed pre-Prohibition style," Emil pointed out.) Emil, who was dressed in a conservative gray suit, a white shirt, and a tie dotted with tiny grape clusters, looked like the last man in the world who would risk getting a spot of steak grease on his clothes, and his tall, spare figure stood out among the throng, which included not only comfortably bulky men but also a smattering of women. "I wonder what the fat-to-muscle ratio is in this room," said a bushy-haired man who identified himself as a book publisher.

Emil explained that the men-only beefsteaks lasted until the nineteen-twenties. "After that," he said, "women began coming, and that's when things like the crudités of celery, carrots, and radishes and the first course of shrimp and lump crabmeat began to creep in. The chocolate cake we're serving is our own twenty-first-century touch. It's very American to have just a piece of meat on the plate—they'd never do that in France." As he said this, an oompah band of four men in boaters and candy-striped shirts struck up the tune of "Margie."

In the days when beefsteaks were as common around the city as barbecues are in Texas, the price of admission was five dollars; diners sat on wooden crates; and cutlery, tablecloths, and napkins were forbidden. Patrons were given aprons, emblazoned with the name of the sponsoring organization, to wipe their hands on. At Beacon, the cost of a reservation was eighty-five dollars a head, including all the beer and wine you could drink; the chairs were sleek and upholstered; the tables were set with silverware and napery; and each diner was handed a tan apron embroidered with the names of the event's principal suppliers—the Brooklyn Brewery, DeBragga & Spitler Prime Beef, Gotham Seafood, and Cascade Linen. A trio of young men, who were eagerly quaffing beer by the bar, said that they had been attracted to the event by a notice in *Time Out*. One of them identified his profession as "construction." The two others said, "Designer."

Once everyone was seated, Beacon's chef and co-owner, Waldy Malouf, a goateed man in chef's whites, introduced the beefsteak proper. He said that one of the inspirations for the affair was an article by Joseph Mitchell, in a 1939 issue of *The New Yorker*, entitled "All You Can Hold for Five Bucks." In a call to action, Malouf noted that, at the old beefsteaks, "whoever drank the most beer and ate the most beef was the champion of the evening." With that, dinner was served: silver platters heaped with boiled shrimp surrounded by crabmeat, accompanied by the usual red and pink sauces. This was followed by platters of diminutive hamburgers, which had been made from the tail and the fatty parts of the cow ("maybe sixty-per-cent fat," Malouf had said); platters of lamb kidneys wrapped in apple-smoked bacon; platters of lamb chops; and, finally, platters of chunky, rare-to-medium-rare, sirloin-shell Black Angus beef that had been aged for thirty-seven days, for a slightly gamier taste than usual, and seasoned with nothing more than salt and pepper. It was served in a sauce of its own drippings, butter, and a dash of Worcestershire.

A man seated at the end of one table exhorted the diners to eat with their hands, but, after obliging him with a few kidneys and a lamb chop or two, most of them reverted to knives and forks. As the food kept arriving, there was a decisive shift from beer to wine, and the table talk turned to the usual subjects—jobs, New York real estate, new movies. But, after finishing off a fourth hamburger, one man declared, "You know what was great? Eating the fatty part!" Another man, making a face as he grabbed a sixth lamb chop, said, "It's a lot of fun, but I wouldn't want to do it tomorrow!"

Soon after the climactic appearance of the steak, an all-male table at the far end of the restaurant began singing "God Bless America." The voices, rough with beer and wine, could barely be heard at first, and they were greeted by groans of embarrassment. But then an adjacent table picked up the tune, and then another, and another, and when it came time for "My home, sweet home . . ." everyone joined in.

—*Charles Michener*

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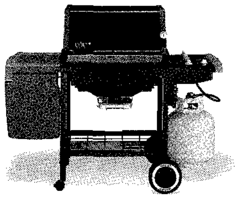

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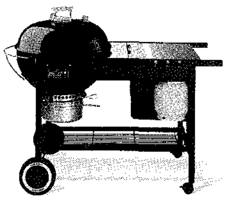

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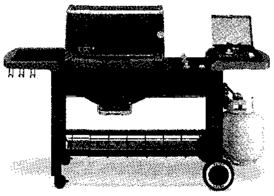

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THE FINANCIAL PAGE
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In 1810, an American businessman named Francis Cabot Lowell travelled to Great Britain for what he claimed was a tour of the English countryside. Along the way, he quietly visited the mill towns that had become the heart of England's booming textile industry, thanks to a new machine called the Cartwright loom—one of the first great inventions of the industrial revolution. Although the textile factories were off limits to foreigners, Lowell talked his way in and memorized the loom's design. Back home, he had a version built, and made it the centerpiece of his own booming textile town. In a sense, Lowell, Massachusetts, was a monument to industrial espionage.

Two centuries later, the spirit of Lowell still haunts American business. Insecure executives are certain that the secret to their success lies just behind their competitors' doors. The fact that coups like Lowell's come along once or twice a century hasn't prevented those executives from being seduced by the notion that one company's secret is another's salvation.

In the last decade, this notion has attained the status of holy writ. The end of the Cold War unleashed a mass of unemployed secret agents on the business world, just as executives were growing especially anxious about foreign competition. The solution, they were told, was to spy on their rivals. Corporate-spook trade groups peddle vague and unverifiable estimates that U.S. companies lose hundreds of billions of dollars each year in purloined trade secrets. In the new movie "AntiTrust," the Bill Gatesian character played by Tim Robbins keeps his empire in trim by monitoring the ideas of earnest programmers and stealing whatever he needs. And the recent book "Spooked: Espionage in Corporate America" argues that successful corporate intelligence can make the difference between "a fat, happy hundred-million-dollar company and bankruptcy."

For most of the twentieth century, industrial espionage meant international espionage; spies stole trade secrets from foreign businesses. The governments of Japan, France, Germany, and Israel all put their intelligence agencies to work on behalf of their nation's corporations. A spate of hysterical books and articles in the early nineteen-nineties depicted an innocent America being sapped of its secrets by wily corporate pirates in Europe and Asia. Of course, now that the economies of Europe and Japan are languishing, that story line doesn't hold up as well. These days, the enemy is the company next door, not just the one across the ocean—or so we're told. The other guys are snooping on you, so you'd better snoop on them.

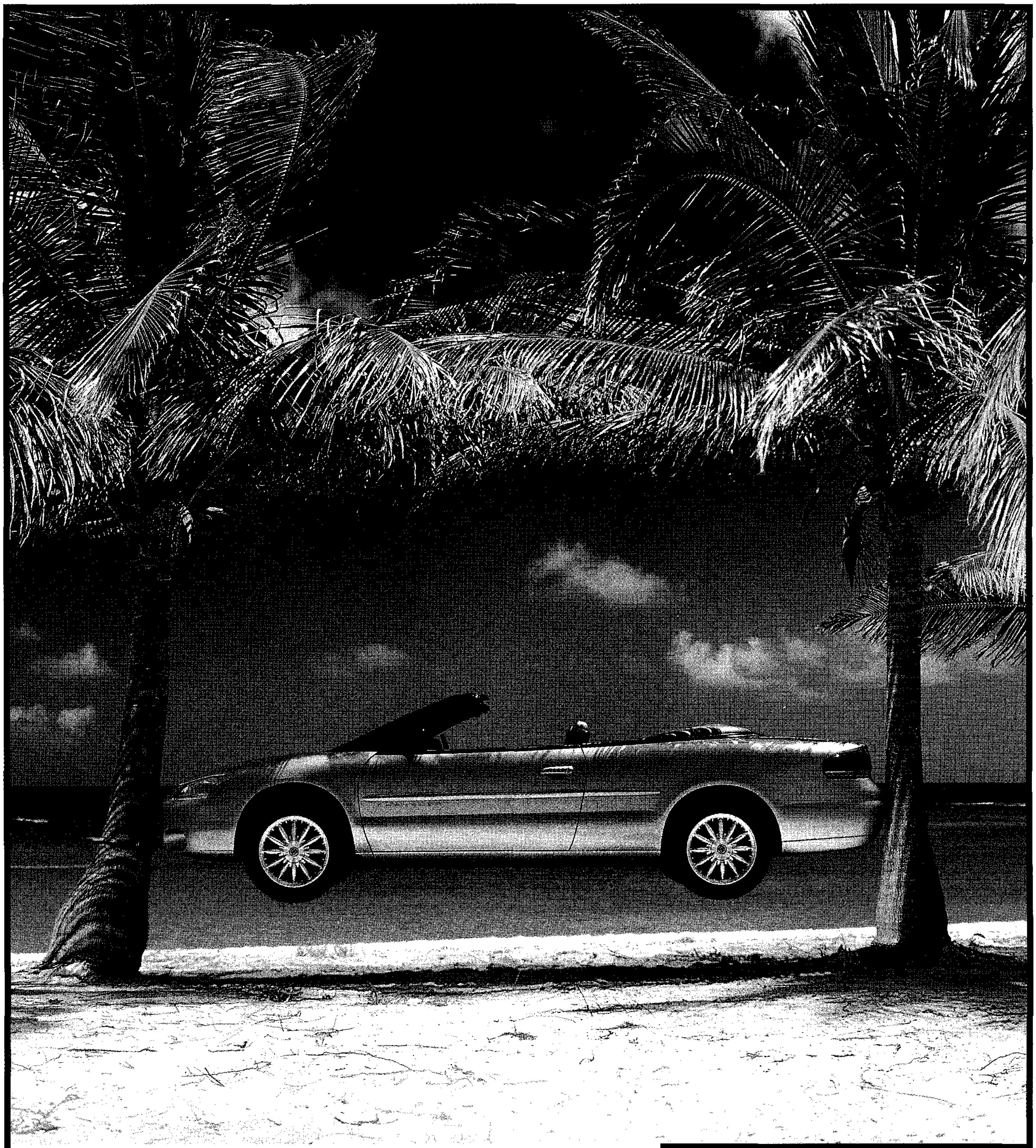
In fact, corporate spycraft mainly benefits the spies. The Enigma moments are few and far between. Most tussles between companies over "trade secrets" are pretty mundane: Old Country Buffet sues Granny's Buffet for stealing its recipes and job manuals. (Old Country lost that one—it couldn't convince the court that its recipes were worth stealing.) The myth of corporate intelligence is that stealing trade secrets and monitoring your competitors' every move automatically gives you an edge. The truth is, corporate intelligence tells you mostly what you should know already—or what you don't need to know. Even worse, it can make you think that your competitors are on to something, when they may be just as rudderless as you are. It's like cheating on a test: unless you're sitting next to the class ace, you're wasting your time.

Motorola, for example, was one of the first major U.S. companies to have a separate corporate-intelligence division. (It was set up by a former C.I.A. agent, in the mid-eighties.) So when its spies discovered that competitors were developing a mobile phone that would work anywhere in the world, the company decided to move forward with one of its own. The result was Iridium, the satellite phone from hell—one of the great debacles of the nineties. In the effort to keep up with the Joneses, Motorola threw billions of dollars down the Iridium rat hole. Meanwhile, the company missed the fact that cell-phone customers were shifting from analog phones to digital phones, which left Motorola playing catch-up with its rivals. If Motorola is first in business-information collection, as the authors of "Spooked" maintain, you might as well be last.

The basic premise of corporate intelligence is that companies must keep up with their competitors. But a company that pays too much attention to its rivals often ends up fighting the last war while being ill prepared for the next. It turns out it's your customers you should be obsessed with, not your competitors. What's more, a successful business rarely depends on some equation locked away in a vault. In the popular imagination, Kentucky Fried Chicken and Coke rule the world because of their coveted secret formulas, but without their distribution networks and branding powers they wouldn't be much bigger than Old Country Buffet. If Popeye's knew the Colonel's "original recipe," would it really be able to sell that much more fried chicken? If you'd stolen the code for Windows in 1989, would you have been able to knock off Bill Gates? The source of a company's success tends to be easy to see but hard to copy. Although thousands of businessmen from all over the world have toured Toyota's production plants, no one can match Toyota's efficiency at making cars. As for Lowell, he may have stolen the Cartwright loom, but his success ultimately arose out of his homegrown organizational techniques. It was the concept, not the Cartwright, that made Lowell's factories the most productive of their time. So send out the spooks if you want. Just keep in mind that the real secrets are hiding in plain sight.

—*James Surowiecki*

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



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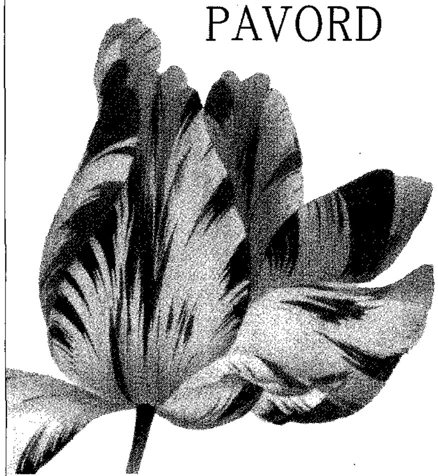

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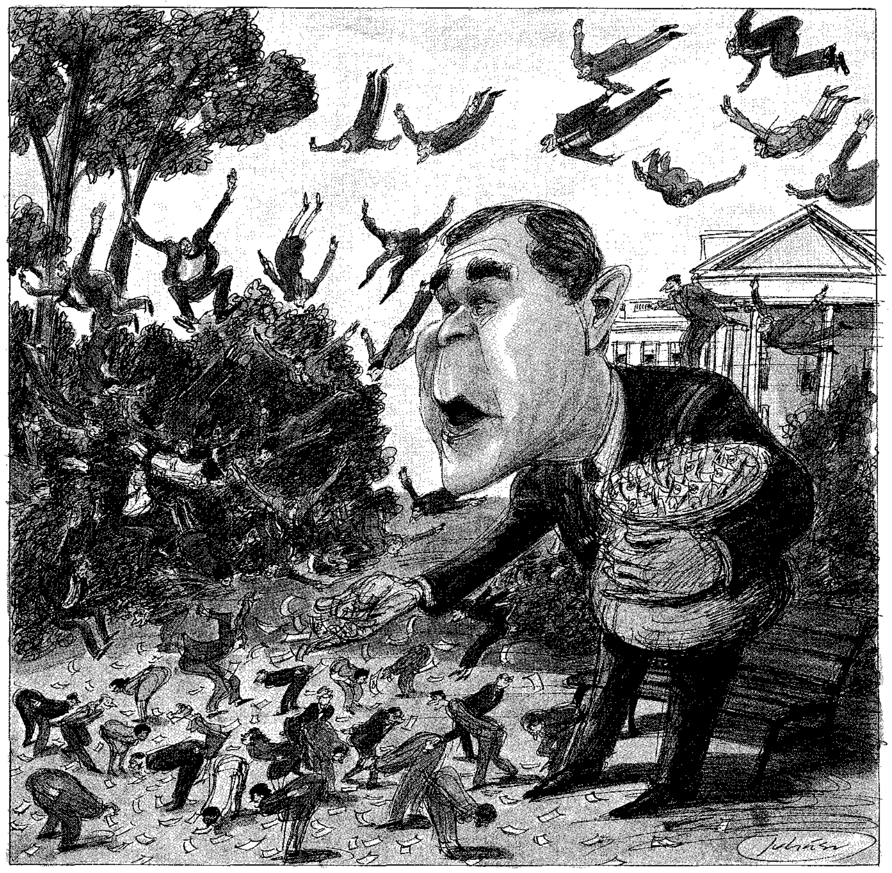
LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

BUSH'S TRILLIONS

How to buy the Republican majority of tomorrow.

BY NICHOLAS LEMANN



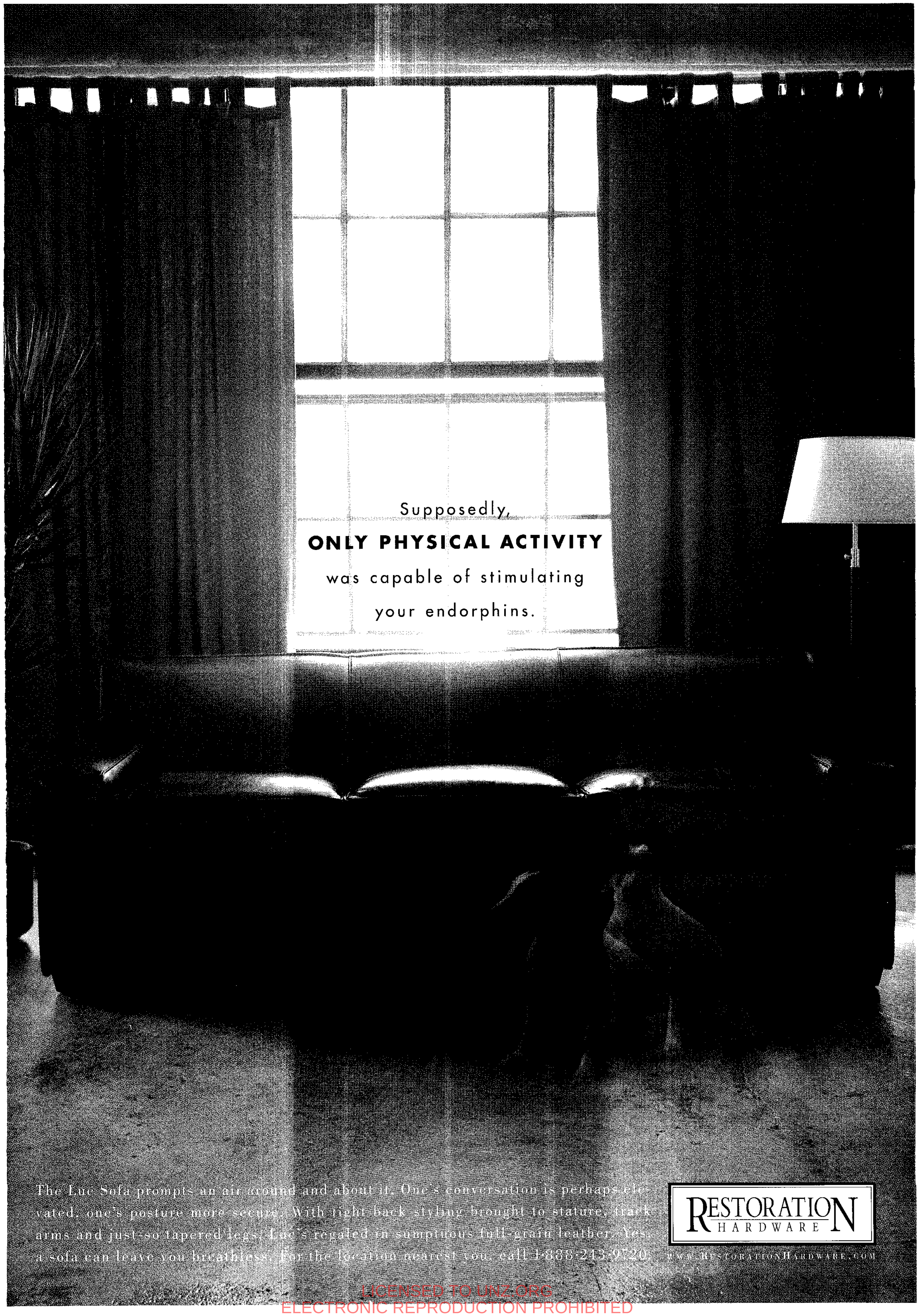
The tax cut may turn the Democrats, willy-nilly, into the party of fiscal restraint.

A few weeks ago in Washington, I went to see a very junior Republican congressman from South Carolina named Jim DeMint, who, I'd been told, is considered a comer in the Party. (He'd better make his move quickly, because he just started his second term and he has promised to step down after three.) DeMint, a polished, handsome man who was previously in the marketing business, was practically on fire about a theory he has developed, which is that the country—and the Republican Party in particular—is facing a decisive moment.

"I think we've got a major crisis in democracy," DeMint said, in the slightly abashed tone of an amiable man who is expressing a concern that he knows may sound exaggerated, but, damn it, that was how he saw things. "We assume that voters will restrain the growth of government because it becomes burdensome to them personally. But today fewer and fewer people pay taxes, and more and more are dependent on government, so the politician who promises the most from government is likely to win. Every day, the Republican Party is losing constituents, because every day more people can vote themselves more benefits without paying for it. The tax code will destroy democracy, by putting us in a position where most voters don't pay for government."

Usually, when people talk about "dependency" in connection with government, they're talking about welfare payments to poor people. DeMint had something more in mind—the entire bargain between state and citizen. In-

VICTOR JUHASZ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come taxation, he said, has been shifting, so that a relatively small number of people at the very top pay for much of government, while middle-class benefits, like old-age pensions, health care, and public schooling, have become ever more generous. Soon, unless something is done, most people will have no reason not to keep voting for more government, because they won't be paying for it. And that will be dangerous for the Republicans. "The Reagan message"—tax cuts—"won't work anymore, because the number of people dependent on government has risen dramatically," DeMint said. "This Presidential election was the last chance to salvage our freedom."

Later, DeMint sent me a lot of statistics supporting his ideas, as well as a four-color printout of a PowerPoint presentation called "Is America Losing Its Freedom?," which he had recently delivered to a group of congressional Republicans. One chart showed that in 1986 the wealthiest one per cent had begun paying more in individual income tax than the bottom seventy-five per cent, and that by 1998 the share of the one per cent had risen to approximately double the share of the seventy-five per cent.

DeMint's theory has some obvious flaws. Social Security and Medicare taxes, which are paid much more evenly by all workers, aren't in his calculations. Still, there is definitely something to it. Until Bill Clinton became President, the electorate was assumed to be so exquisitely sensitive to federal taxation that, if you were a national politician, to raise taxes, or even to entertain the possibility publicly, was to perish. A prime example was the first President Bush, who was elected on a promise never to raise taxes, delivered in language lifted from action-adventure movies, and was then defeated because he broke it.

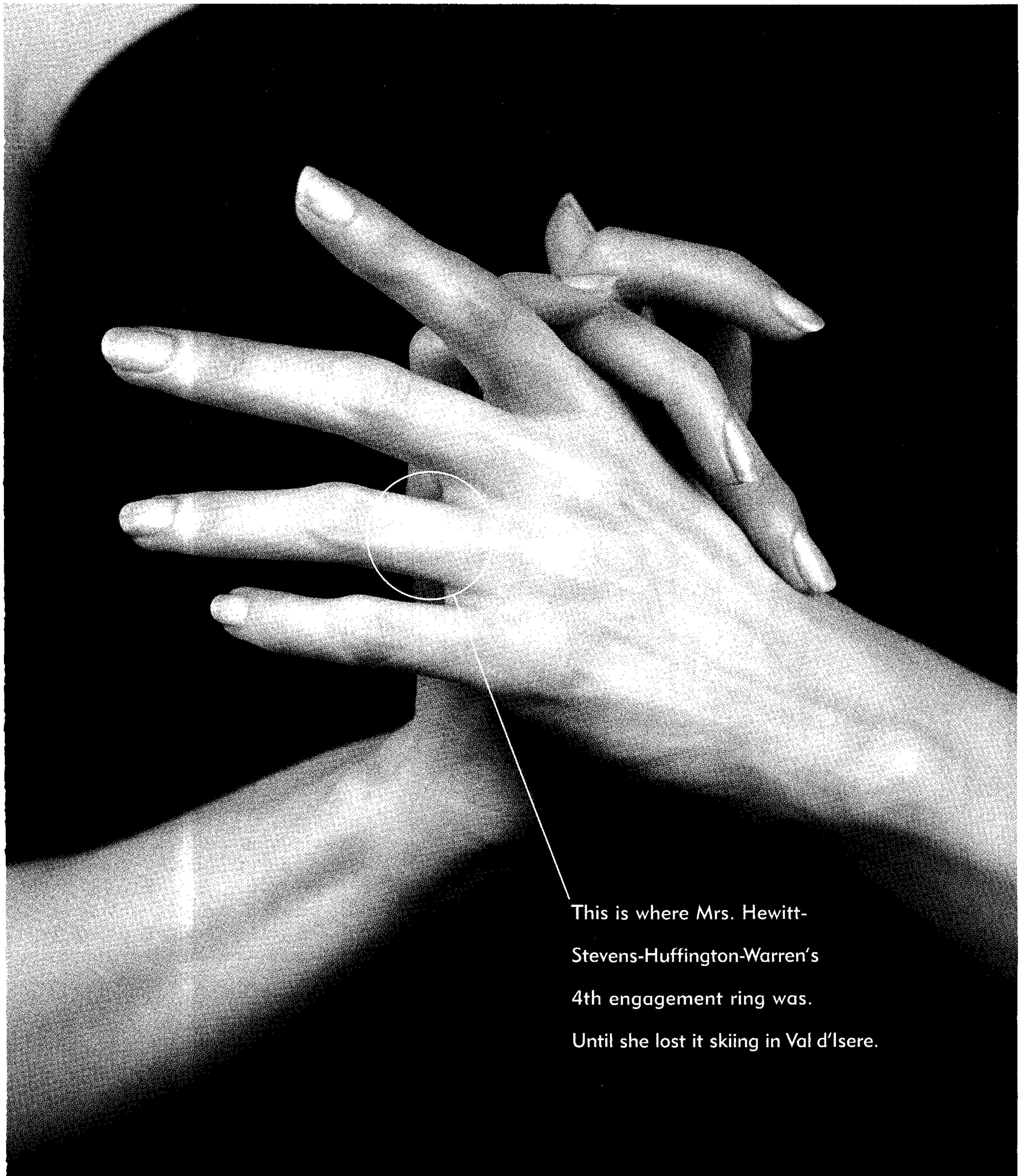
Clinton altered the social compact. If you divide the country into fifths by income, during his Presidency the federal tax rate, and the share of taxes paid, went up substantially for the top fifth, especially for the top one per cent, and down for the other four-fifths. Clinton didn't take from the rich and give to the poor, he took from the rich and gave to the broad middle class. He raised the top income-tax rate from 31 per cent to 39.6, and he cut taxes for working people through measures like the child credit and the earned-income-tax credit, which come out to about twenty billion dollars and thirty billion dollars a year, respectively. The top one per cent now pay about a quarter of all federal taxes, and the top five per cent about two-fifths. (The reason these fortunate folks haven't been more up in arms about their taxes increasing is that during the Clinton years their incomes rose much more than their taxes did.) "This progressive trend is probably one reason most of the public seems so indifferent to G.O.P. calls for big tax cuts," Robert McIntyre, Washington's leading liberal tax expert, wrote last summer—exactly Jim DeMint's position. Clinton also created the impression that, if you're middle class, the government, in return for your taxes, will give you what you need—family leave, more police officers and teachers—instead of giving your hard-earned money away to poor people. DeMint is right. Clinton moved most Americans in the direction of thinking of government more as a giver of benefits and less as a taker of taxes. That is not good for the Republican Party.

When a new President from a different party takes office, he has an opportunity to alter the political correlation of forces in the United States by rearranging what government does. If this doesn't begin to happen in the first six months of the new Administration, it probably won't happen at all. Right now, President George W. Bush has a much better opportunity than you'd expect—given his nonexistent margin of victory, his inexperience, and his soothing, unambitious campaign rhetoric—to remake the Republican Party in national politics.

Social Security, the biggest federal program, makes for a good example. From a Republican point of view, an ideal relationship between the government and the people might look like this: Social Security, although it is packaged as insurance, is really a welfare program; workers pay taxes to the government, which sends the money on to retirees. Instead, workers could have individual retirement accounts, whose managers they could designate themselves. Then they would become members of what conservatives like to call "the investor class," which is to say that, as they enter senior-citizenhood, they would care more about how the markets are doing than about the level of government benefits. As John Goodman, the head of a conservative think tank in Dallas and an occasional adviser to Bush over the last few years, puts it, "They would tend to resist government actions that reduce the value of their investments."

The same principle of loosening the bond between voters and government could be applied elsewhere. In the case of the second-biggest program, Medicare, the government could give states a lump sum that people could use to buy private health insurance. Public education could

"I'm not yelling at you, I'm yelling with you."



This is where Mrs. Hewitt-Stevens-Huffington-Warren's 4th engagement ring was. Until she lost it skiing in Val d'Isere.

A word of advice: if you plan on popping the big question this Valentine's Day, here's another you may want to consider. Will your engagement ring be properly insured? With Chubb jewelry insurance, you don't have to worry. You're covered even if the ring is lost or stolen anywhere in the world. And if misfortune does strike, you have the freedom either to replace the ring or receive a cash payment. What better way to ensure you and your ring live happily ever after? For more information, call your Chubb agent or 1-877-60-CHUBB or visit www.chubb.com.

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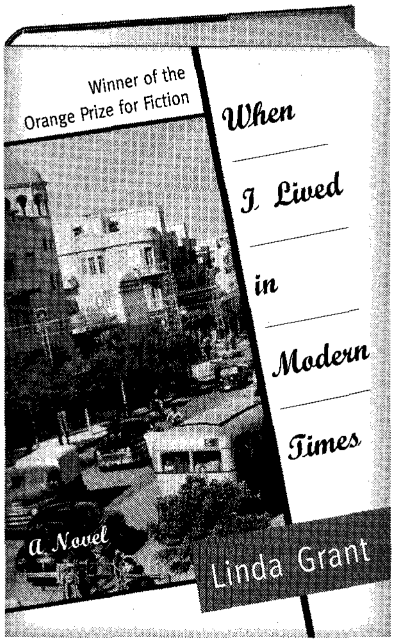
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be financed more through individual vouchers and less through direct government support of schools. The tax system could be made less progressive, with fewer brackets, so that the non-rich would bear a greater share of the burden and would therefore begin to think of government programs, with newly awakened suspicion, as costing them money. A program of tax cuts stretching out over many years would make it more difficult for the Democrats to launch new programs that would increase voters’ loyalty to them. All these changes would have the collateral benefit of strengthening Republican interest groups, like stockbrokers, and weakening Democratic interest groups, like public-employees’ unions.

Bringing this conservative dream world into being is exceedingly tricky. The main services that government provides in America—Social Security, Medicare, and public schooling—have tens of millions of high-voter-turnout beneficiaries, so a proposal to alter them fundamentally is a political risk. For a candidate who was rarely very far ahead in the polls, Bush was unusually willing to take a first poke at these basic provisions of American governance. During the Presidential campaign, he proposed creating individual retirement accounts in Social Security, a federal school-voucher program, and a big, across-the-board, ten-year tax cut. The Gore campaign was practically gleeful about these positions, because of their presumed unpopularity. But now Bush, having taken them and having (barely) survived, has some room to maneuver in the direction of building up his party’s strength for the long term.

The main event in Washington this year is going to be Bush’s tax cut. If it passes, it will be more significant than any single piece of legislation that Clinton was able to achieve in eight years. Clinton’s health-care plan, which was even more ambitious, would have moved the polity strongly in a Democratic direction by creating a major new middle-class-benefit program; the Bush tax cut could have an effect of similar magnitude, but one that would be helpful to the Republicans.

While Bush was tied up for the months of November and December with the post-election controversy, he was also getting a couple of enormously lucky breaks. When the economy slowed down over the holidays, it created a rationale for cutting taxes which he hadn’t used during the campaign: the economy needed goosing. At the same time, the Office of Management and Budget and the Congressional Budget Office were gift wrapping a wonderful present for Bush: projections, now public, that show the federal-budget surplus to be hundreds of billions of dollars bigger than everybody thought. Another, less visible break was that Election Day exit polls, which circulated widely among Democrats in Congress, showed voters favoring across-the-board tax cuts rather than cuts aimed at lower-to-middle-income people. This time last year, Bush’s tax-cut proposal looked like bothersome baggage, something to which he had committed himself in anticipation of a strong challenge from the billionaire flat-taxer Steve Forbes. Al Gore was going to use it against him. Today, all Washington, from Alan Greenspan on down, is for a deep tax cut.

During the first working week of the Bush Administration, I went to see Senator Kent Conrad, of North Dakota, who has just become the ranking Democrat on the Senate Budget Committee. The size of Bush’s tax cut will probably be decided in a budget resolution, which means that Conrad’s committee will be the place where its fate is determined. What Conrad thinks matters a lot.

Conrad, a careful, meticulous man who spent most of his early career working in the North Dakota Tax Department, handed me a printout of a presentation called “Budget Surplus Considerations” (presentation software seems to have become the lingua franca of the United States Congress), and led me through it. The Senate Budget Committee staff had tentatively set the surplus through the year 2011 at $5.7 trillion. But if you took out estimates of the portions that ought to go into the Social Security and Medicare trust funds the number would come down to $2.6 trillion. Then if you subtracted to account for the passage of a few seemingly inevitable legislative items, such as a new prescription-drug benefit, you’d be down to $2 trillion.

That was page 1 of the presentation. On page 2, Conrad reëstimated the cost of Bush’s tax cut, to account for var-

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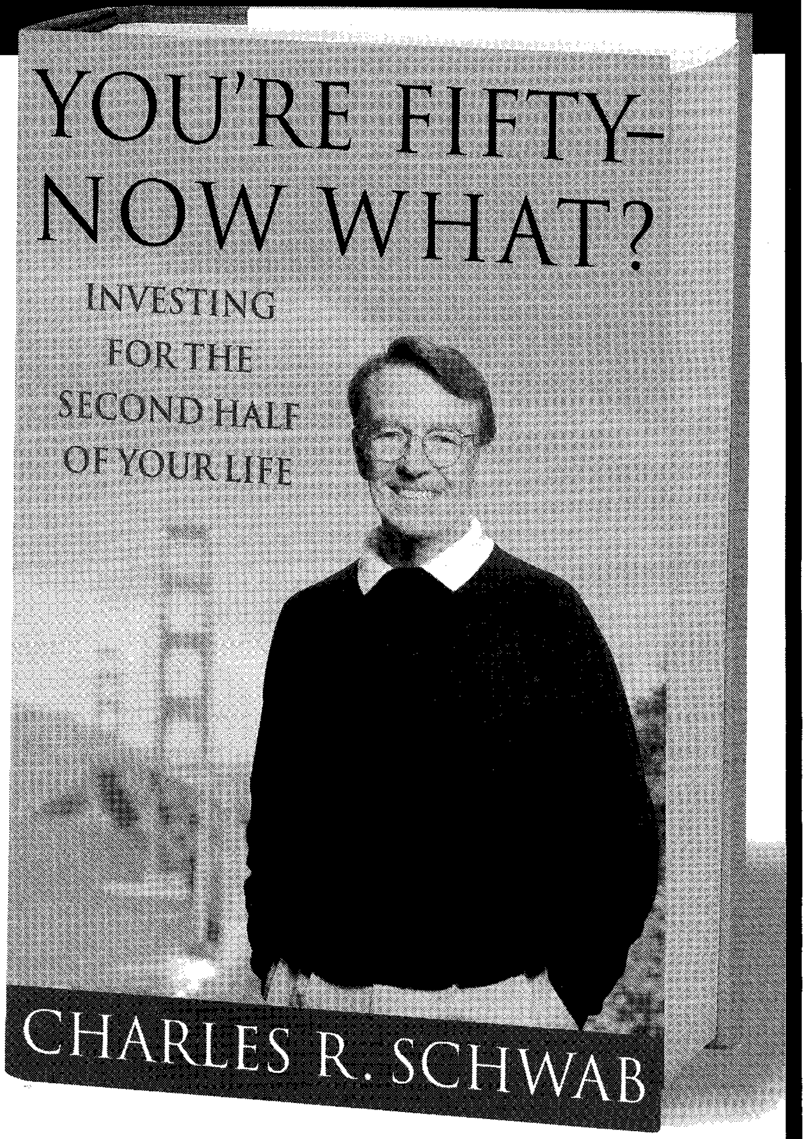

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ious items that had been too low, and came up with $2.2 trillion—ahead of Bush's own estimate of $1.6 trillion, and more than the surplus as Conrad figured it, in other words. Page 3 was labelled "Possible Compromise." It suggested setting aside the portions of the surplus meant for Social Security and Medicare and dividing the remainder into three portions, each worth eight hundred and fifty billion dollars: a tax cut, a series of new domestic programs, and a "strategic reserve" in case the federal-budget situation became less rosy, which would happen quickly if there was a recession. The new, higher budget-surplus projections assume that, starting next year, the economy will grow at a rate of more than three per cent a year over the next decade. In the last quarter of last year, it grew at a rate of only 1.4 per cent.

"Every indication is that Bush will push hard for his full proposal," Conrad said. "It's a mistake. It's a serious mistake. It's a very serious constraint on the federal government, because there is very little money left over: little for Social Security, nothing for other domestic programs, nothing as a hedge. He's used up all the money. There is nothing left for other priorities. It just doesn't make sense to put all our eggs in one basket that way."

Fine, but isn't the news here not that Kent Conrad thinks the Bush tax cut is irresponsibly large but that he is now in favor of an eight-hundred-and-fifty-billion-dollar tax cut? Conrad even said that he was willing to see the top rate of 39.6 per cent come down. In 1999, just after the federal budget surplus had materialized, most Democrats on Capitol Hill were willing to support tax cuts in the range of three hundred billion dollars over ten years. Last year, Gore got only as high as five hundred billion. Now, just three months after Election Day, the Democrats have gone up by well over fifty per cent. The idea of making the tax cut retroactive to the beginning of the year, so that people's paychecks will get a little bigger as soon as the bill passes, began floating around Washington after the election. That was not something that Bush had proposed during the campaign, but early this month he endorsed it.

When Bush was governor of Texas, his style was to become buddies with the leaders of the legislature and to compromise on his proposals if they told him it was necessary. (Nonetheless, he wound up cutting taxes so much that the Texas legislature will be spending most of its 2001 session figuring out how to avoid a budget deficit.) He was good at getting part of what he wanted and declaring victory. A similar outcome is the most likely in Washington this year. Bush is already doing well in the friendship-with-legislators department. He can lower the range of his tax-cut proposal to a figure closer to Kent Conrad's and still be able to say, accurately, that he delivered the biggest tax cut since Ronald Reagan's, in 1981—and his, unlike Reagan's, won't instantly produce big deficits. He is the first Republican President since Eisenhower to have control in both houses of Congress. He seems to be in an awfully good position.

A little while after I met with Kent Conrad, I spoke on the phone with Karl Rove, who has been the chief political strategist for Bush's entire career in elected office. Obviously, Rove was thinking past the tax cut, to a whole first-year program for Bush that could strengthen the Republican Party considerably. "Take a look at our agenda," Rove said. "Education. This year, we picked up seven points in the suburbs over '96. Our education plan allows us to make further gains in the suburbs. It will also allow us to make gains with Hispanics and African-Americans. The tax cuts will make the economy grow. As people do better, they start voting like Republicans—unless they have too much education and vote Democratic, which proves there can be too much of a good thing. Look at the course of the campaign. There's a lot of data. If you give people the choice between a tax cut and more government services, they'll choose the tax cut. The more Bush talked about an across-the-board cut, the more support for it grew. People do have a desire for basic services—schools, helping the less fortunate—but not for unrestricted government."

Rove can't show too many cards right now, but it's easy to imagine Bush's next few moves. With a little skill, Bush can work his way around the most unpopular parts of the Republican agenda, as Clinton was able to do with the most unpopular parts of the Democratic agenda. Bush can signal the right-to-life movement, through language and appointments and minor initiatives, that he is on its side, without having to speak personally on the subject or propose anything significant. Education vouchers, which, according to polls, are not popular in the all-important big-city suburbs, where almost all kids go to public school, are contained in Bush's education proposal, but members of the Administration, including Bush himself, in his first Saturday radio address, have been signalling that they might be willing to drop vouchers in the negotiations over the bill. I've

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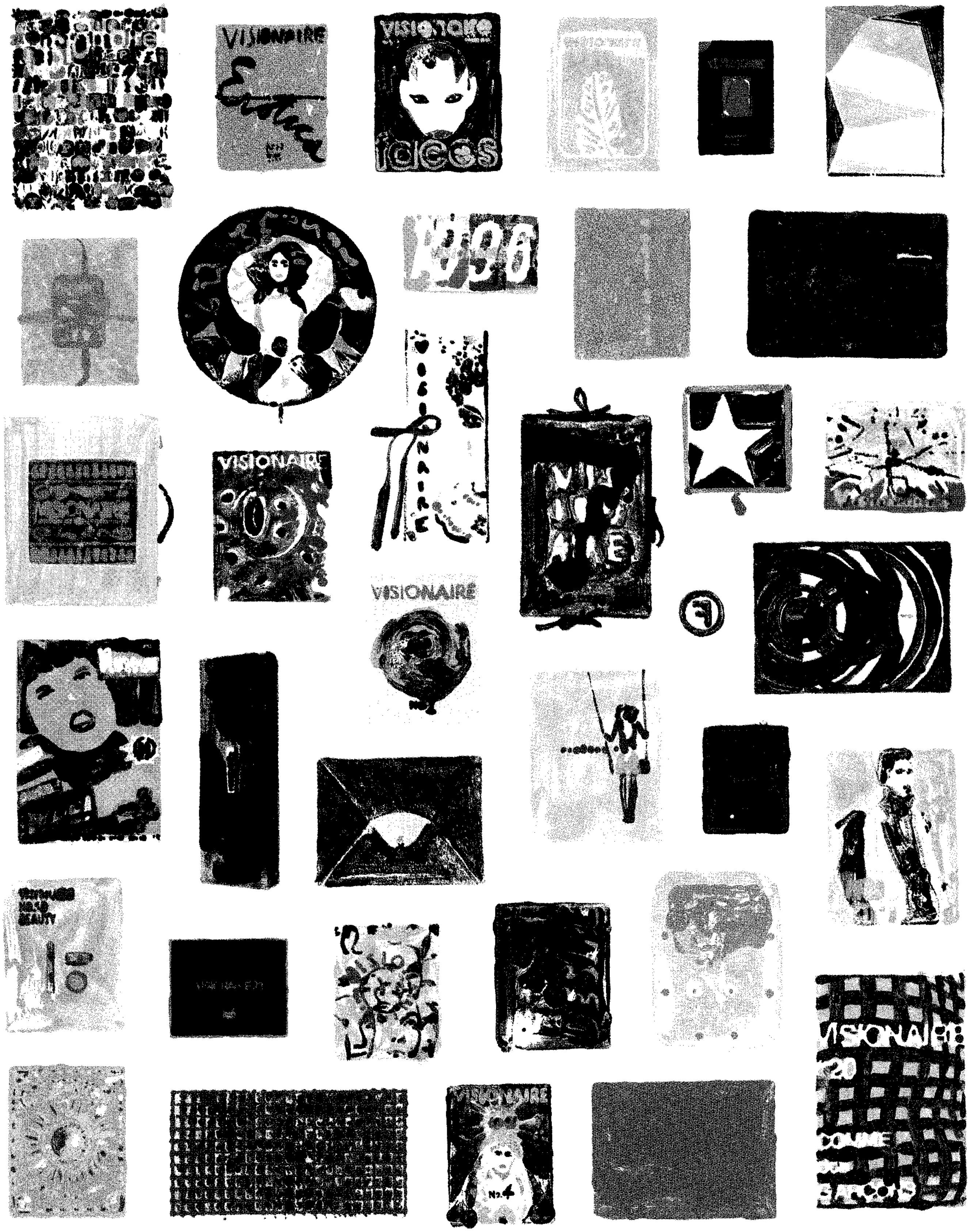
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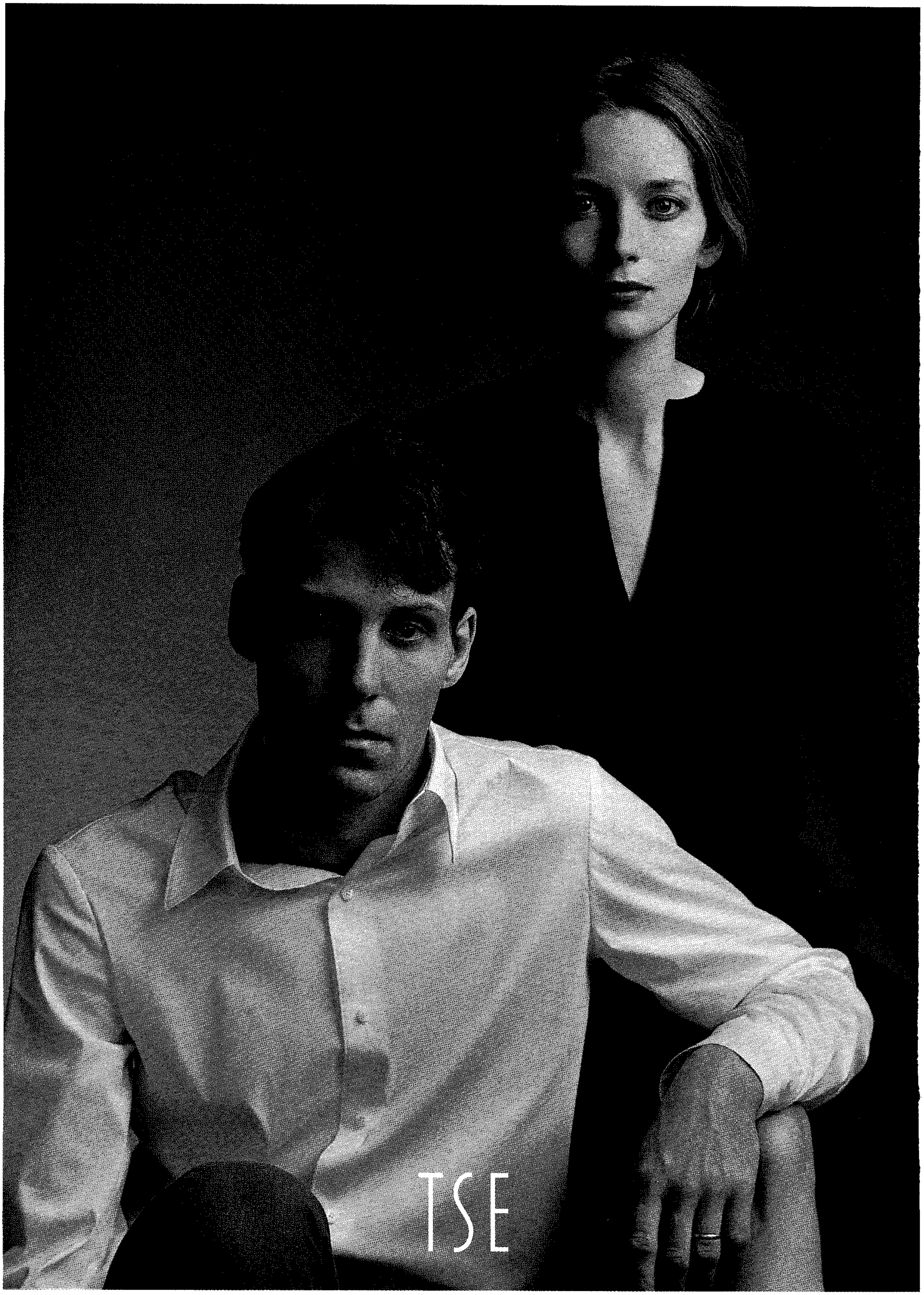
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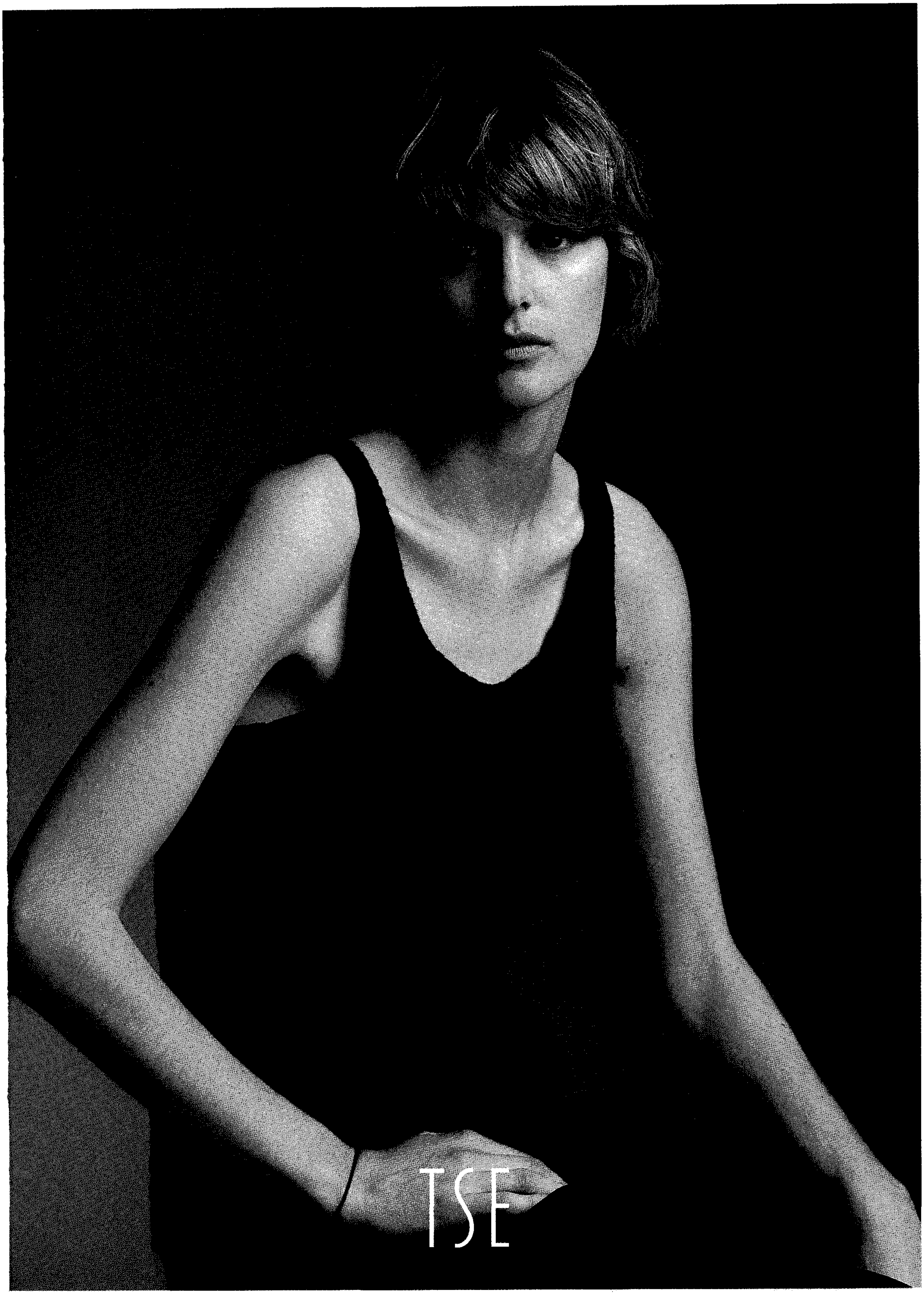
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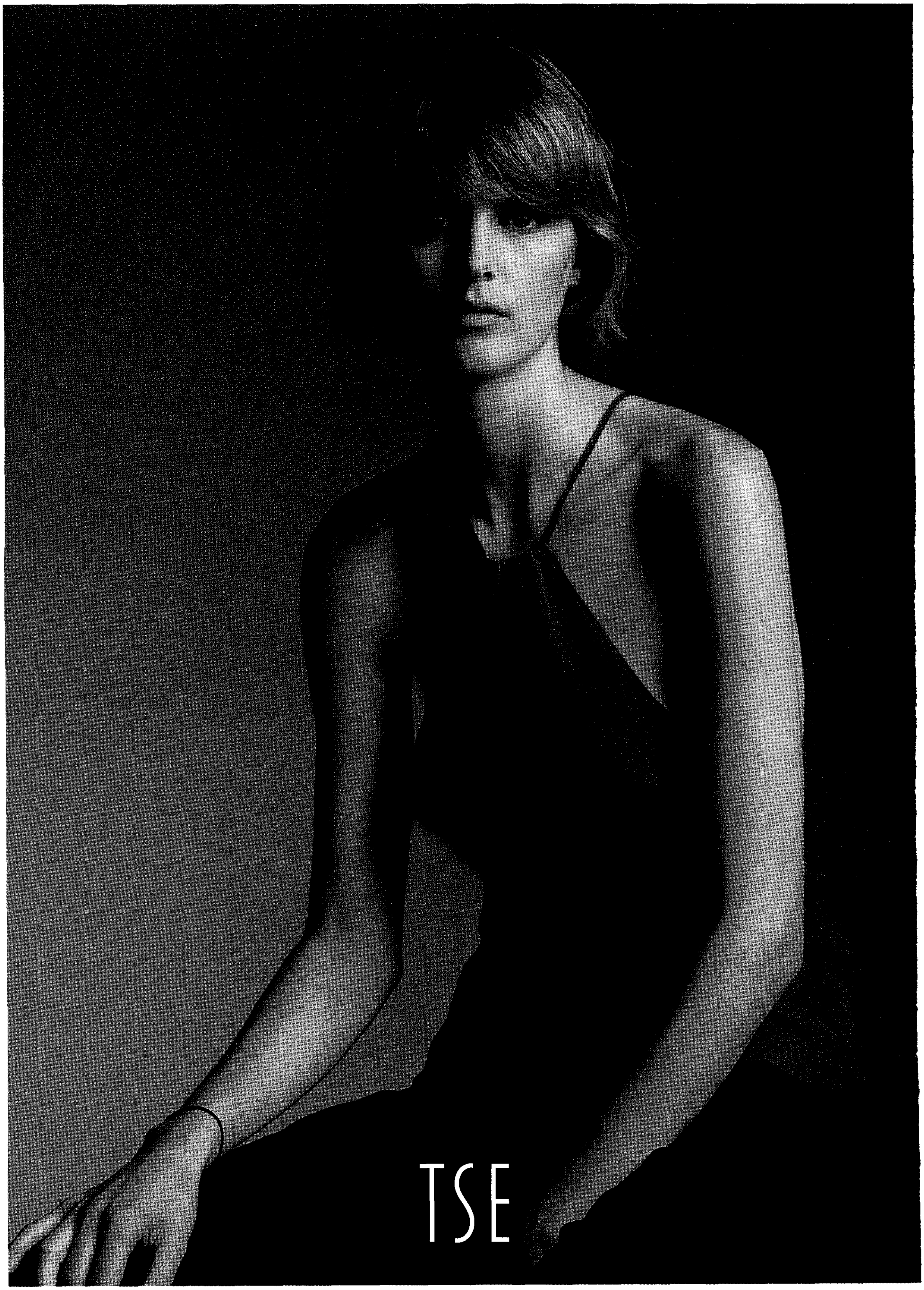
"For your eyes only. The times of limited-edition publications have cycled back around it seems. From their first anarchistic beginnings with *Minotaure*, the "official organ" of André Breton, the alternative small-run publication has often dazzled, always relentlessly focused on changing the way we look at the printed page. Looking haughtily over its shoulder to Fleurs' *Flair*, VISIONAIRE rolls up its sleeves, cups its hand to its mouth, flexes its muscles . . . Oh, I could go on all day . . . and whispers, 'The eyes have it.'"
—David Bowie

The brainchild of Stephen Gan, Cecilia Dean, and James Kaliardos, VISIONAIRE is a creative playground for leading designers, artists, photographers, and thinkers. It's a gallery in print. A cabinet of irresistible curiosities. A daring iconoclast dressed to thrill. VISIONAIRE emerges four times a year in limited editions from collaborations with some of fashion's most important names. Comme des Garçons. Fendi. Gucci. Louis Vuitton. On every page, bold new images from fashion visionaries. Avedon. Goldin. Lagerfeld. Meisel. Testino. Weber. In one remarkable decade, VISIONAIRE has forged a past that looks like a vision of the future.

Experience VISIONAIRE firsthand at *Dreaming in Print: A Decade of VISIONAIRE*, an exhibition at The Museum of the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York City. Featuring original art from every issue as well as a preview of VISIONAIRE 36 POWER—created in collaboration with Shiseido—the exhibition is on view from February 9 to April 21, 2001.

COVER ART FRANÇOIS BERTHOUD, 2000
1. MARIO TESTINO, ISSUE 21 DECK OF CARDS—THE DIAMOND ISSUE, 1997
2. MARCUS PIGGOTT AND MERT ALAS, ISSUE 27 MOVEMENT, 1999
3. INEZ VAN LAMSWEERDE & VINOODH MATADIN, ISSUE 31 BLUE, 2000
4. WORKING IN THE OFFICE, ISSUE 9 FACES, 1993
5. KARL LAGERFELD, ISSUE 23 THE EMPEROR'S NEW CLOTHES, 1997
6. HERMÈS ROCKING HORSE FOR THE VISIONAIRE "TOYS" EXHIBITION, 1999
7. ISSUE 22 CHIC LAUNCH, 1997 8. PIERRE ET GILLES, ISSUE 6 THE SEA, 1992
9. MARIO TESTINO, ISSUE 22 CHIC, 1997 10. MARIO TESTINO, V MAGAZINE, 1999
11. STEVEN KLEIN, ISSUE 27 MOVEMENT, 1999
12. PRESS CLIPPING FROM THE LONDON SUNDAY TIMES, 1998
13. KARL LAGERFELD WITH PREMIERE ISSUE OF V MAGAZINE, 1999
14. INEZ VAN LAMSWEERDE & VINOODH MATADIN, ISSUE 19 BEAUTY, 1996
15. BETH B, VISIONAIRE GALLERY, 2000 16. MARIO SORRENTI, ISSUE 25 VISIONARY, 1998
17. VISIONAIRE TEAM PHOTOGRAPHED BY JASON SCHMIDT, SELF SERVICE MAGAZINE, 2000
18. NICK KNIGHT, ISSUE 20 COMME DES GARÇONS, 1997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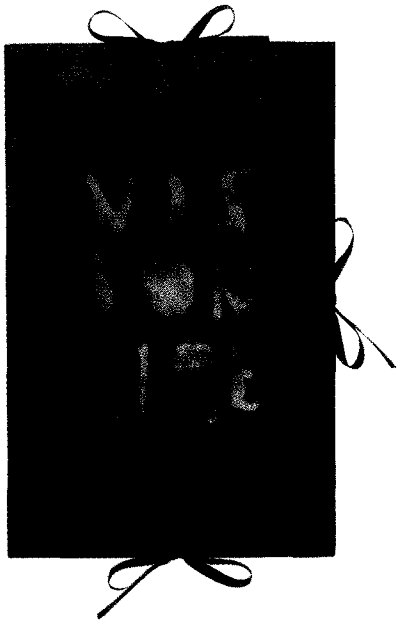
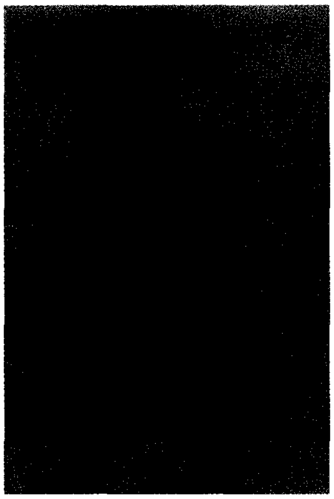
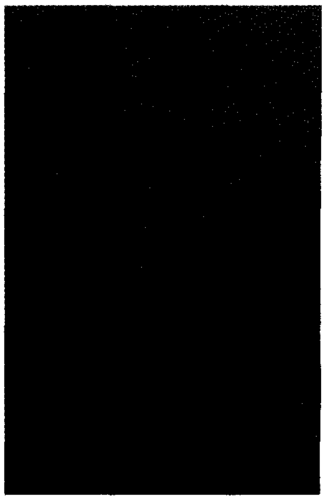


MAX VADUKUL



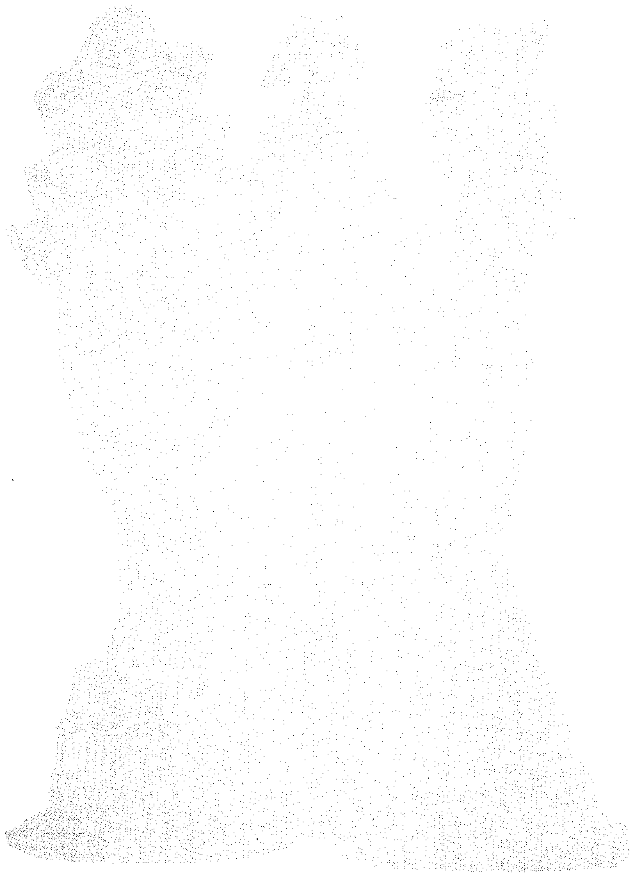
MATS GUSTAFSON



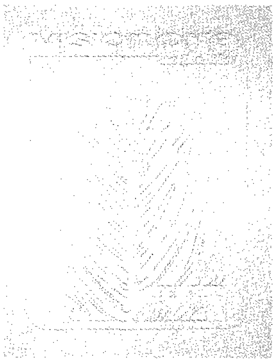
BRUCE WEBER

VISIONAIRE 7 BLACK OCTOBER 1992

Black evokes an extraordinary number of emotions and ideas. Darkness. Profit. Sophistication. Even humor. "Black doesn't have to be black; it's more about the tricks it plays on your mind," says photographer Bruce Weber, who contributed an image from a 4-H Club Fair in Montana. Somehow, the photo fit perfectly into an issue inspired by the legendary all-black Comme des Garçons collection, Edward Gorey's macabre cartoons, and the work of artist Antoni Tapiès. Collected in a traditional artist's portfolio, BLACK explored the absence of light through the eyes of such luminaries as Ross Bleckner, Peter Lindbergh, and François Berthoud. Each of the 1,500 issues featured its own original and unique photo collage.



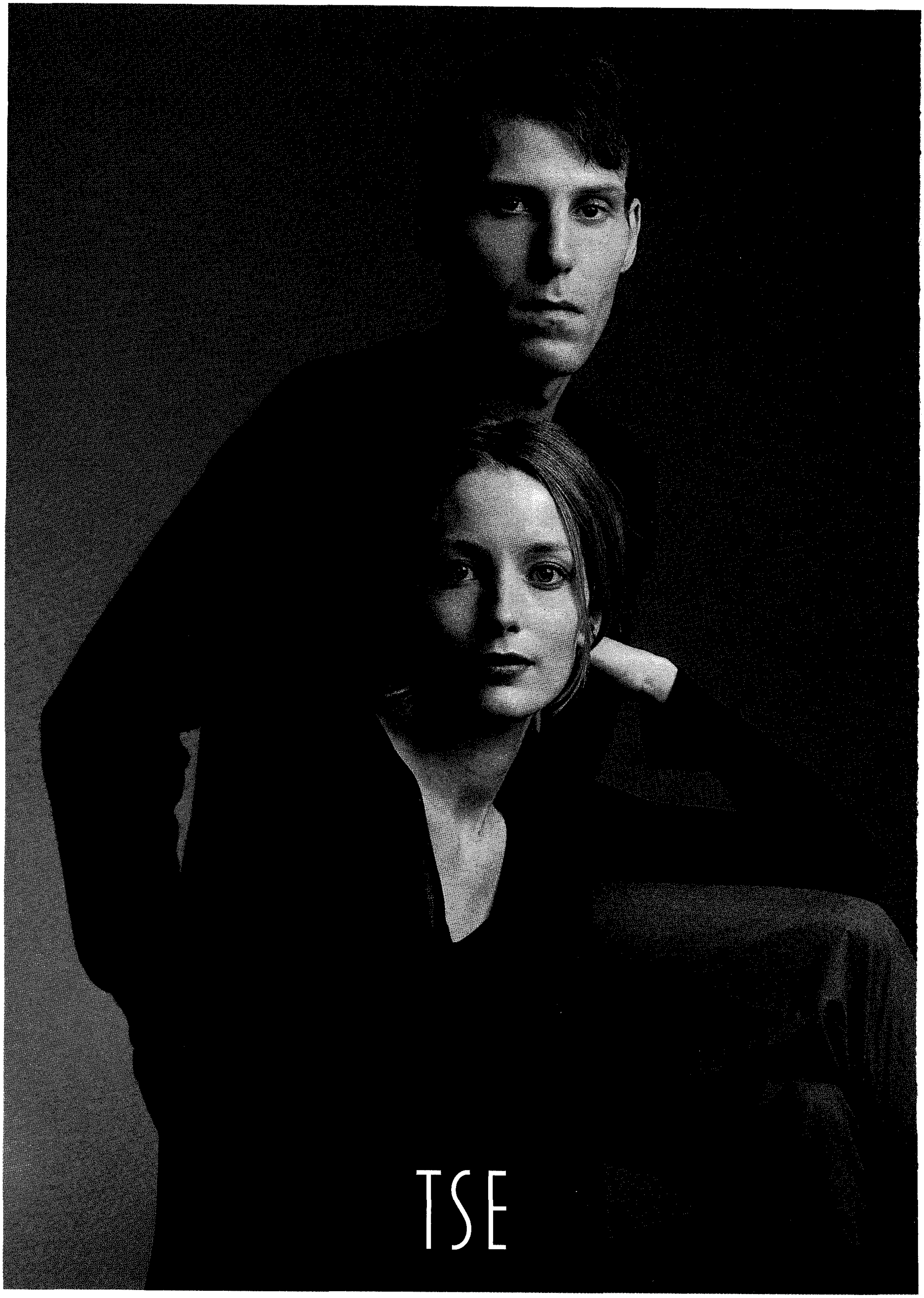
RUBEN TOLEDO



VISIONAIRE 11 WHITE APRIL 1994

Words appear embossed on a page. Images emerge in relief. And a spectrum of white glimmers in matte and varnish. Without ink, WHITE used only texture to show and tell, expressing thoughts in braille and offering sensuous tactile communication. WHITE may possibly be the first publication challenging you to read with your eyes closed. Helmut Lang, whose designs were featured in the issue, says, "I was very fond of the WHITE issue because white paper or white fabric is how everything starts in fashion. White could also mean blank," he continues, "and a blank page or a blank canvas is the threat for every artist. The WHITE issue was maybe the most subtle issue, fragile but confident, braille included, visible for the one who understands."

STILL PHOTOS GREG BROOME AND ERIC MCNATT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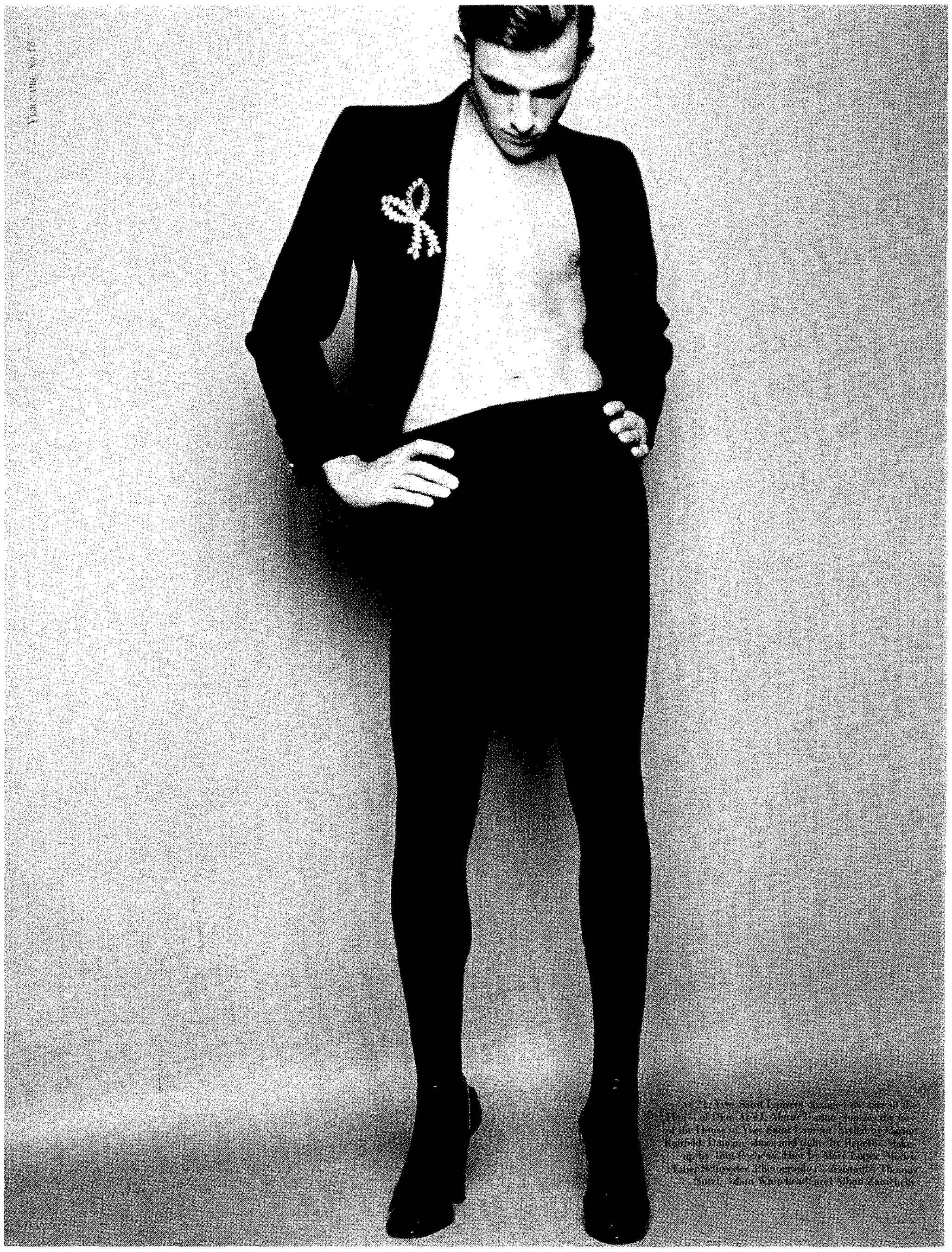
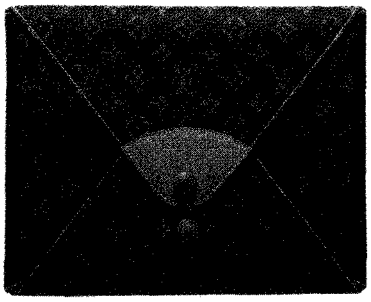


MARIO TESTINO

INEZ VAN LAMSWEERDE & VINOODH MATADIN

JEAN-PAUL GOUDE

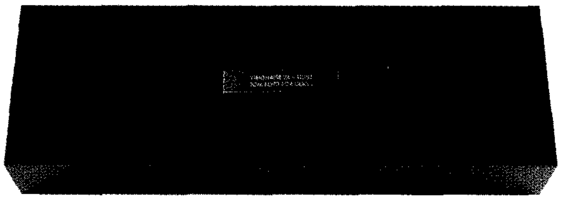
NAN GOLDIN



STILL PHOTO GREG BROOME

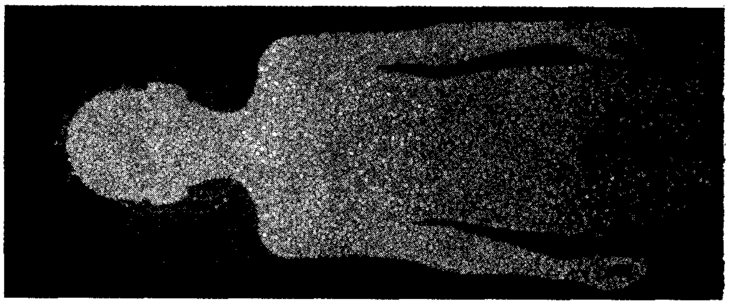
VISIONAIRE 18 FASHION SPECIAL AUGUST 1996

In FASHION SPECIAL, forty-four artists took inspiration from forty-four designer collections. Nan Goldin on Helmut Lang. *Craig McDean on Comme des Garçons.* Terry Richardson on John Bartlett. Seen through the eyes of an artist, fashion moves beyond its traditional runway and sidewalk spheres into all-new stellar configurations. *And the packaging was as alluring as the contents: a specially designed* VISIONAIRE Louis Vuitton envelope.

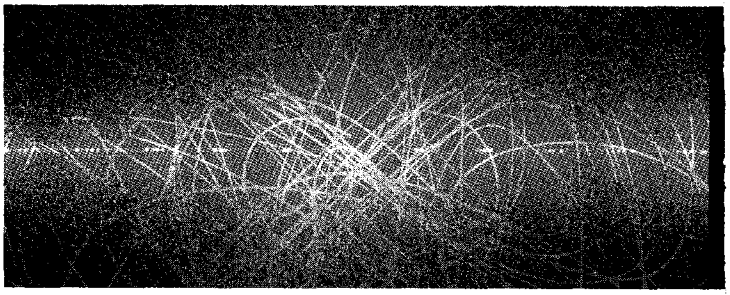


VISIONAIRE 24 LIGHT MAY 1998

With equal parts inspiration and illumination, LIGHT was the issue where filament met fine art. Guest edited by Tom Ford for Gucci, LIGHT was as ambitious as it was audacious. It began with transparencies from twenty-four artists, photographers, animators, and architects, including Alexander McQueen, Andreas Gursky, Wolfgang Tillmans, and Nick Knight. The contents? Transparent. The case? A play on a photographer's light box. The result? The first battery-operated publication.



CHRISTOPHER BUCKLOW

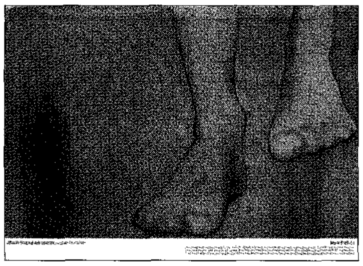


MARIO TESTINO

INEZ VAN LAMSWEERDE & VINOODH MATADIN

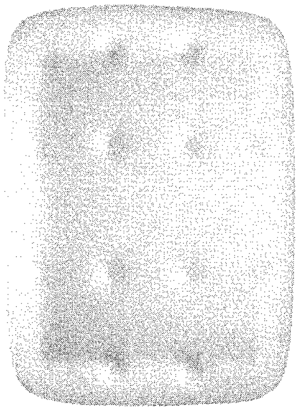
THE ANNUNCIATION by Gregory Crewdson
Luke 1:26,30-31,34

GREGORY CREWDSON



MATS GUSTAFSON

STEVEN MEISEL

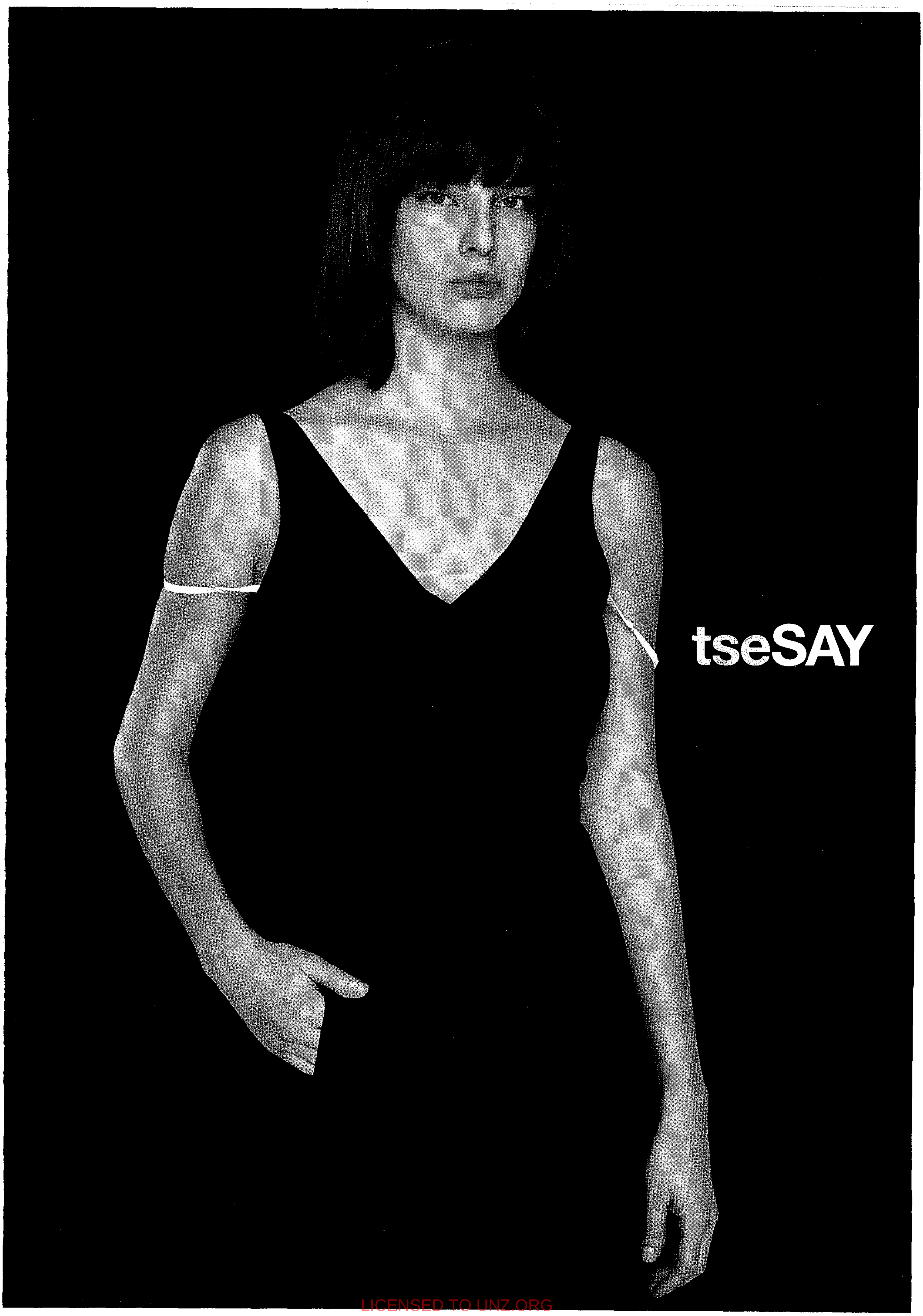


VISIONAIRE 28 THE BIBLE

JUNE 1999

The Bible has inspired art for centuries. A testament to contemporary imagination, VISIONAIRE's millennial offering, THE BIBLE, put the good book into the modern milieu. Let there be *Adam and Eve* by Mario Testino. *Noah's Ark* by Frank Gehry. *Salome and John the Baptist* by Andres Serrano. *The Apocalypse* by Steven Meisel. And a custom-designed case by Philippe Starck—a self-described militant anti-believer and one of the best people destined for this project. "Like all integral anti-believers, I am fascinated by the Bible," he says. "My idea was to create mystery and immateriality in a modern way."

STILL PHOTOS GREG BROOME AND ERIC MCNATT GREGORY CREWDSON Courtesy of Gregory Crewdson and the Luhring Augustine Gallery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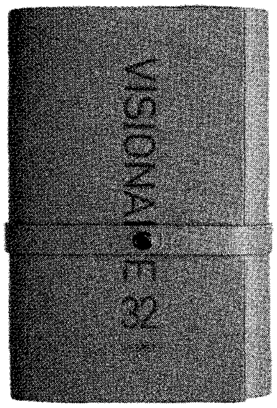
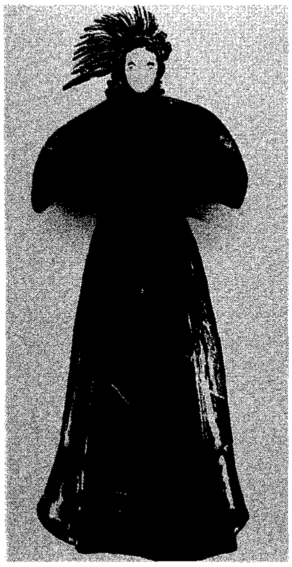
CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: OLIVER WASOW, DAVID LACHAPELLE, WOLFGANG TILLMANS, ANDREAS GURSKY, OLIVER HERRING, DANIEL KLAJMIC

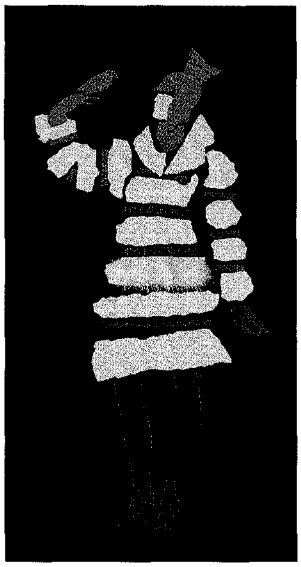


VISIONAIRE 32 WHERE? JUNE 2000

A sense of place isn't defined by just the physical. The question Where? recalls the atlas of mind and soul. Taking inspiration from Hermes, messenger of the gods, WHERE? presented fifty-five different postcards from destinations both real and surreal. "WHERE? seemed very appropriate," says contributor Oliver Wasow, "because my work is about other places, other times, the transcendence of space and, for lack of a better word, fantasy. It's also about travel—places I'd like to go but have never been, and this is what the issue was really all about." Packaged with a pencil in a custom-made Hermès leather case, WHERE? invited travellers of every stripe to send a card from wherever they were, emotionally or geographically, with a familiar message, "Wish you were here."



YOHJI YAMAMOTO



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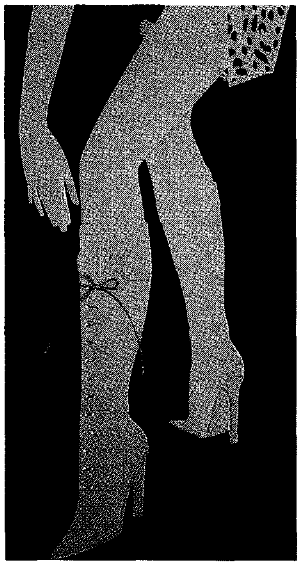
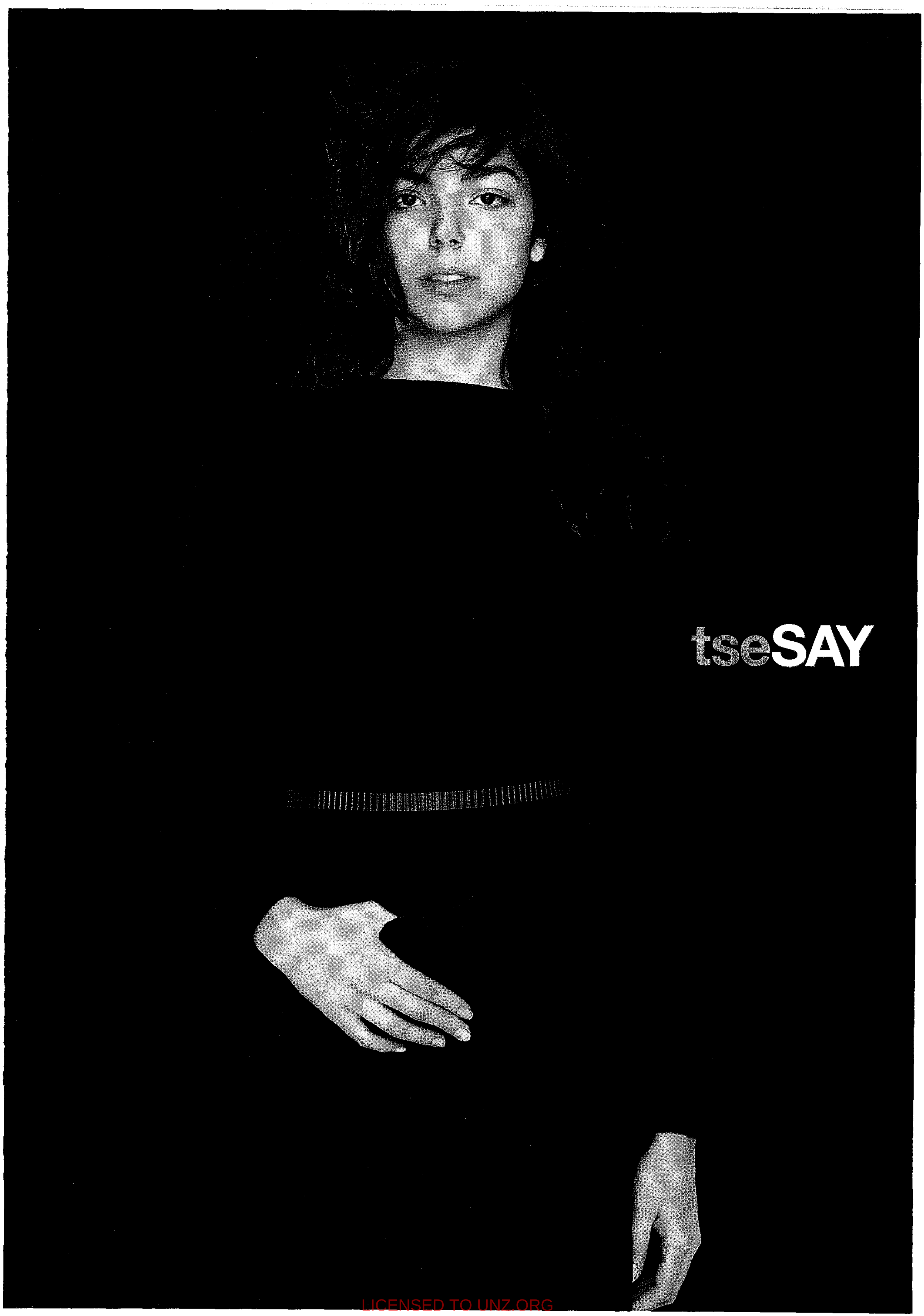


CHRISTIAN DIOR

VISIONAIRE 33 TOUCH OCTOBER 2000

With TOUCH, a collaboration with the house of Fendi, beauty was in the hands of the beholder. Illustrator François Berthoud interpreted twenty looks from the Fall/Winter 2000-2001 New York, Paris, and Milan collections in textures that beckoned curious fingertips to do more than just turn the pages. Working with such effects as foil-stamping, fur, hair, and sculpt-embossing, TOUCH was a totally tactile experience. The unbound plates arrived wrapped in a wearable pony-skin *cache-col*, and encased in a brushed-gold metal box. "Sometimes, if you're lucky, you get two or three special treatments," says Berthoud. "But here every plate was completely different, created using a different printing technique. I was thrilled because we really did it all the way through. It's very extreme—but this is what makes VISIONAIRE VISIONAIRE."

STILL PHOTOS GREG BROOME OLIVER WASOW, Courtesy of Janet Borden, Inc.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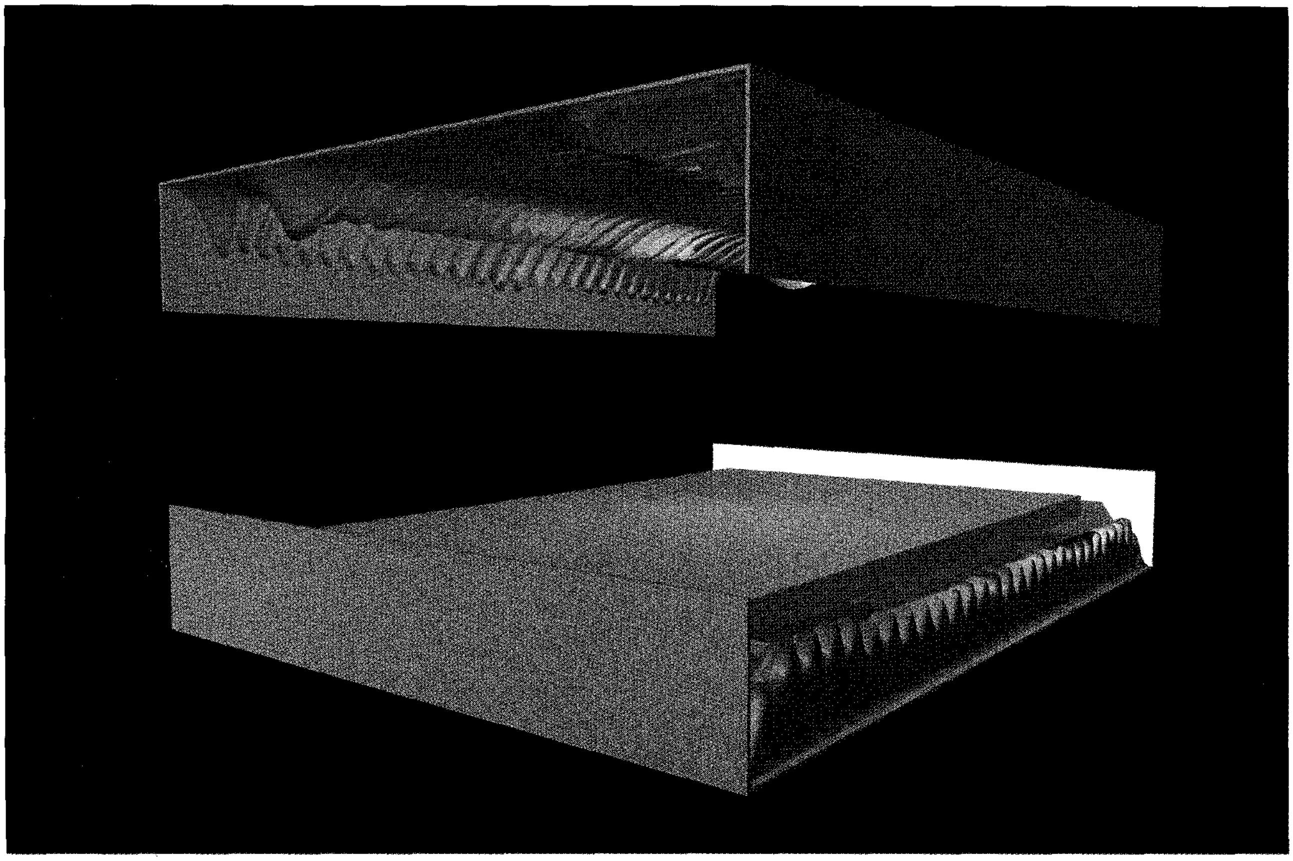


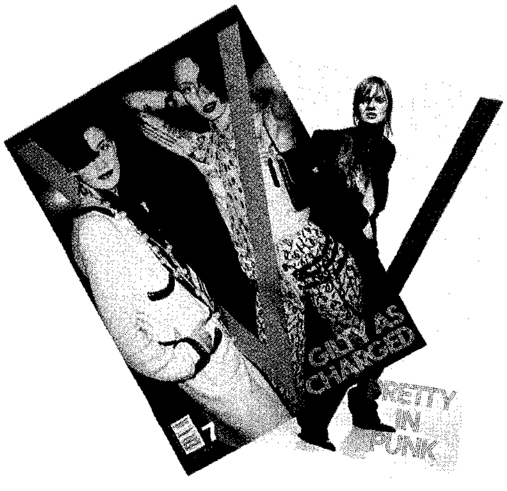
GREG LYNN FORM

VISIONAIRE 34 PARIS FEBRUARY 2001

For this issue, VISIONAIRE and Hedi Slimane, Design Director of Dior Homme, invited leading architects, artists and designers to portray the City of Light in an unprecedented way—not by referring to the past with familiar nostalgia and romanticism, but instead by depicting the city of tomorrow. Architect Greg Lynn designed an innovative sculptural piece to contain a large-format hardbound book of these original works. Constructed of enameled metal, this monolithic case opens to reveal an interior topography specifically engineered to hold the book as though suspended in space. Contributors to this edition include architects Neil Denari, Andreas Angelidakis, and Dominique Perrault; video artist Chris Cunningham; artists Thomas Demand, Elisabeth Ballet, James Casebere and Craig Kalpakjian; graphic designers H5 and John Maeda; and special text by the French band Air.

V MAGAZINE

If VISIONAIRE is a couture publication, V MAGAZINE is the ready-to-wear line. Launched in September 1999 as the younger sibling to the limited-edition quarterly, 30,000 V's are sent out into the world every two months, spreading the VISIONAIRE message to a wider audience. The approach is both insider and international, with a roster of contributors ranging from Karl Lagerfeld to David Bowie, Jeremy Scott to Nan Goldin. Produced in a bold, over-sized format, V is a celebration of ideas, inspirations, and fashion with a capital F.



STILL PHOTO GREG BROOME

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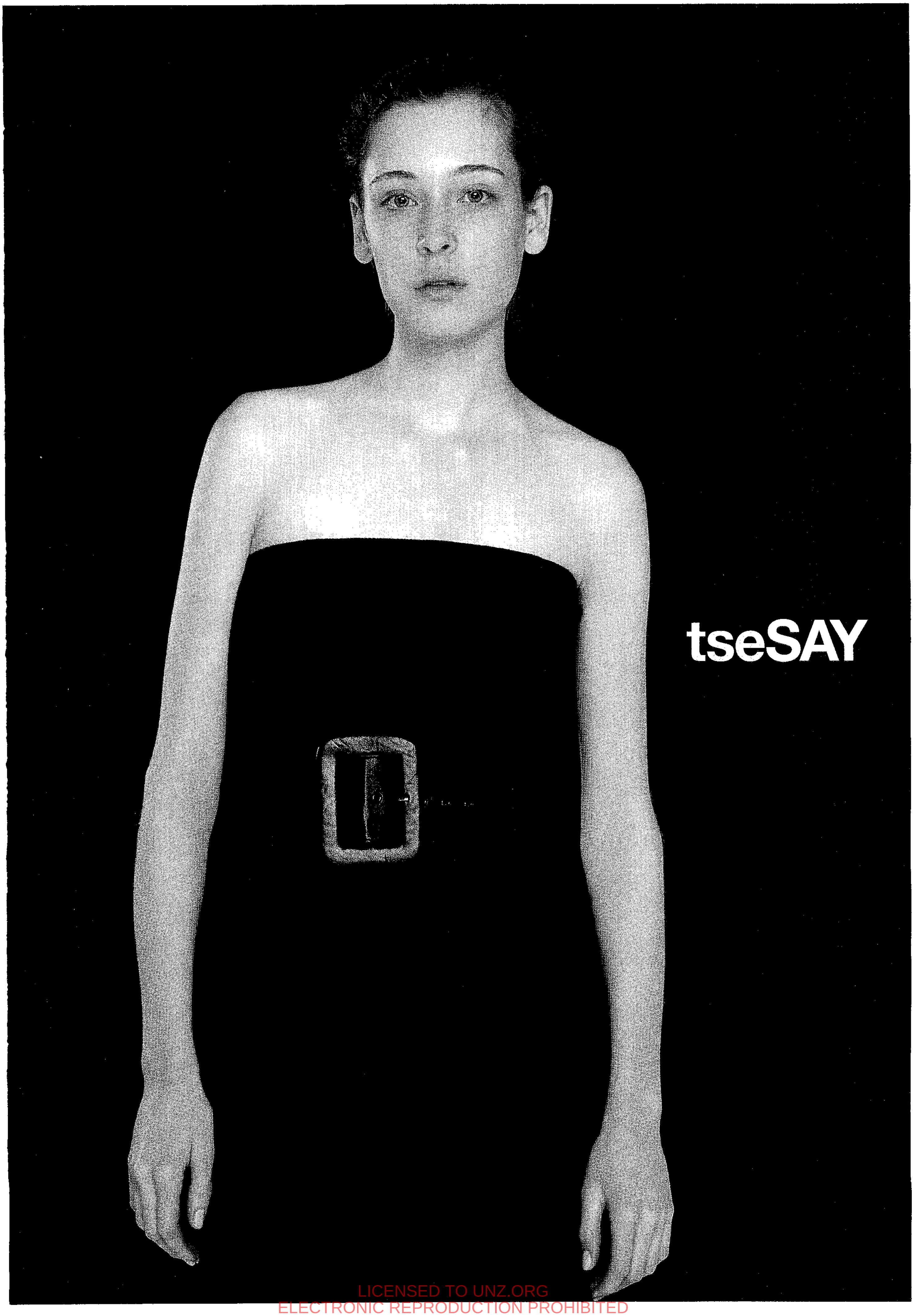
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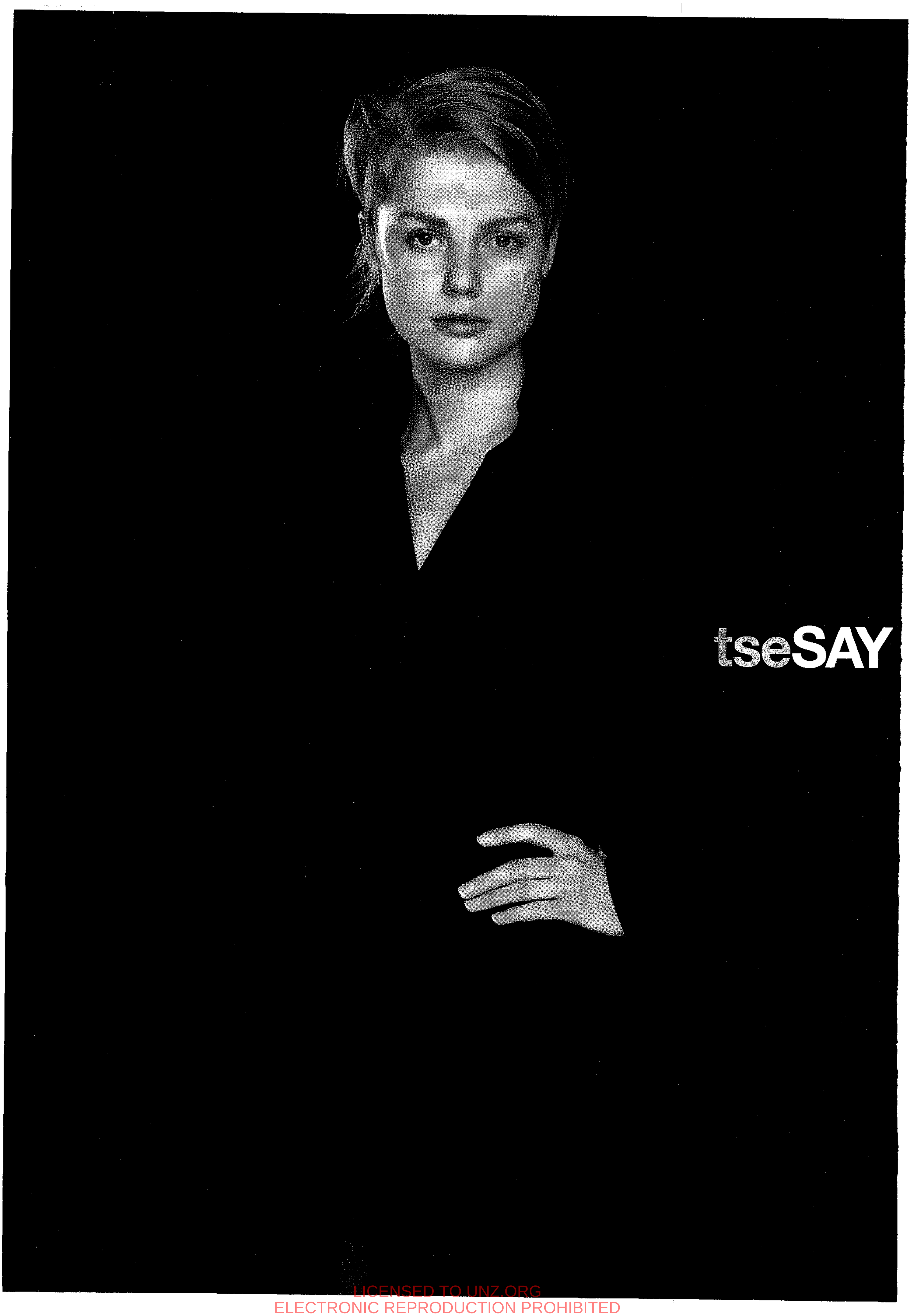
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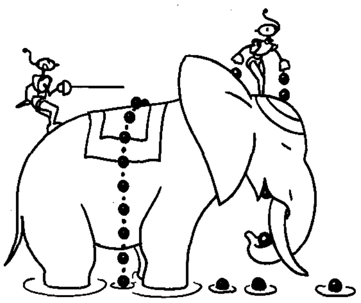
heard that Bush has also said this privately to Democrats in Congress. Without vouchers, yearly testing in the basic subjects would be left as the most obvious feature of the bill, which will alienate teachers (but they're Democrats anyway) and may win over suburban parents. On Social Security, Bush can put off—at least until after the tax cut—another potentially explosive issue by appointing a commission to draft a plan for individual private accounts, rather than immediately proposing legislation. (Rove put this forward as a likely scenario.)

Bush can try to provide the one new government service that the public most wants, a prescription-drug benefit, through private insurance companies rather than through Medicare, thus preventing that program from growing or becoming more popular. Then he might plausibly claim to have delivered important new programs in education and health, taking away the Democrats' exclusive claim to those issues in the way Clinton took reducing crime away from the Republicans. Bush's initiative to promote faith-based social programs takes away the Democrats' monopoly on caring about helping the poor while also, by creating a tax credit for donations to such programs, redirecting money from the government to evangelicals. Bush can also try to diminish the influence of some of the main Democratic interest groups by pushing "tort reform" (hurts trial lawyers) and "paycheck protection" (cuts union dues), and by resisting campaign-finance reform of the kind John McCain wants (reduces the power of individual contributors in politics more than that of organized labor). In each of these cases, Bush can try to find a Democratic co-sponsor for his legislation, to create an aura of bipartisanship. And has anybody noticed that Bush's Cabinet includes former elected officials from four big states—Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, and New Jersey—that usually vote Republican but went for Gore in 2000?

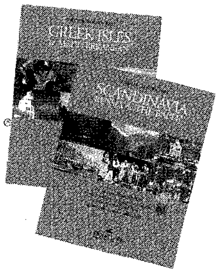
If all this happened, Bush not only would have passed a popular tax cut but would have made it difficult for the Democrats to offer voters more government services; instead, they'd have to be the party of fiscal restraint, because all the money for services would have been removed from the federal budget for at least the next ten years. The tax code would be left looking more the way Jim DeMint wants it to look. Under Bush's campaign tax-cut proposal, the share of the federal-tax burden borne by almost everyone would rise slightly, and the share borne by those in the top one per cent would fall significantly. But this wouldn't be obvious to the middle class, because people's actual tax payments would go down. (A family whose income is in the middle fifth would pay $453 a year less in federal taxes; a family in the top one per cent would pay $46,072 less.) Bush can return to the partial privatization of Social Security, Medicare, and public schools in the fall, or next year. Alternatively, he can remind us of his often-repeated campaign line—"I want to do a few things and do them well"—and, after the tax cut passes, start spending a lot of time at his ranch.

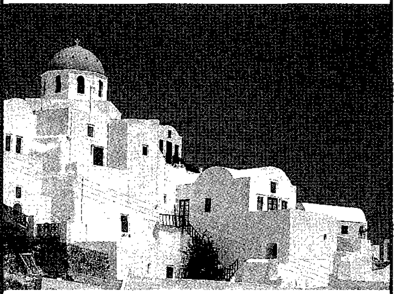
Nothing ever goes as well in the event as it does prospectively. Some unexpected crisis, or scandal, or mistake by Bush could suddenly take away the new Administration's momentum. Like Al Gore during the campaign, the Democrats could stop calling Bush's tax cut a risky scheme and start pointing out how heavily it benefits the top one per cent. I asked Karl Rove about this, and he said, "What's interesting is, I'm not certain people believe it. They get those statistics by including the abolition of the death tax." That's Republican for the estate tax, which the United States passed in 1916, which only two per cent of estates pay, and which Bush will surely propose phasing out.

Right now, the most obvious problem for Bush seems to be that conservative Republicans, especially in the House, will want to cut taxes more than Bush originally promised, and will also want him to stand firm on political-capital-depleting causes like Social Security privatization. Bush's most ambitious initiative in Texas, a 1997 overhaul of the tax system, was killed by Republicans and lobbyists, not by Democrats, and the same thing could happen now in Washington. Twenty years ago, Reagan's budget director, David Stockman, delivered to the journalist William Greider that memorable line about Reagan's tax cut "The hogs were really feeding." Once the idea of big changes in federal taxes and spending is in play, Washington comes to life. Everybody wants something. Already, the advocates of a cut in the capital-gains tax, not satisfied with the substantial reductions that they got in 1997, are bestirring themselves. They may soon be joined by the powerful lobbies for more favorable tax treatment of pensions and heavy machinery—boring and not generally noticed but big-dollar budget items. If Bush's first budget resolution gets overloaded to the point where it will obviously throw the federal government back into deficit, that could sink it.



If, on the other hand, Bush manages to leverage the tiniest imaginable election victory into a big tax cut, rich in Republican-majority-building potential, it will be just the latest example of the endlessly complicated nature of his relationship with his father. George H. W. Bush has done two politically stupid things in his life. The first was moving, in 1948, to a state dominated by the Democratic Party. That helps to explain why Bush twice failed to win statewide office in Texas. The second, in 1990, was breaking his no-new-taxes pledge. Both these things now look like paternal sacrifices for the sake of the son, although that couldn't have been apparent to either of them at the time. George W. Bush was able to grow up in Texas, absorb the middle-American conservative culture that had always eluded his father, and come into middle age when the wilderness decades for Texas Republicans had ended. Like his father, he twice ran for statewide office in Texas, but he won both times. The elder Bush's budget deal terminally alienated the conservative wing of his party, but it paved the way for the process (furthered by Clinton) of bringing the government's revenues up to the level of its spending. Without it, we might not have had the surplus that may be about to pay off politically for the younger Bush, big time. ♦





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U.S. JOURNAL

LAST NIGHT AT THE DINER

A kitchen impresario and the town that needed him.

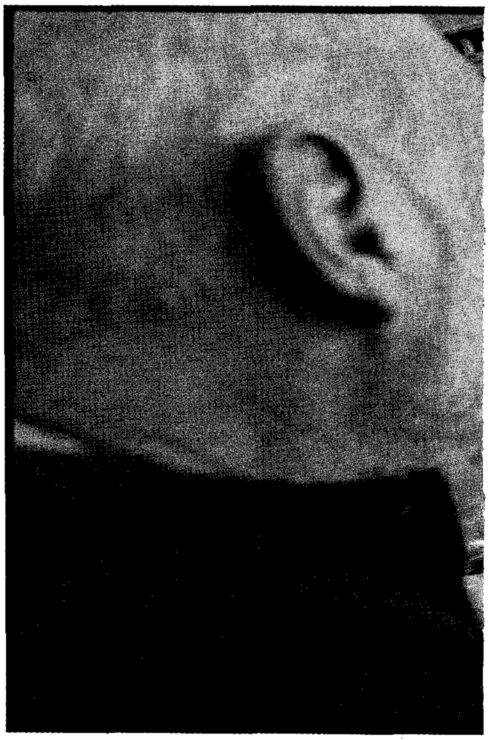
BY MARK SINGER

LEE, MASSACHUSETTS

On the surface, there was nothing mysterious about Joe's Diner. It was a diner owned by a guy named Joe Sorrentino. All day long, people came in and sat down—at the counter or, if the stools were occupied, at one of four tables. You ordered, the food was delivered, while you ate you chatted with Joe or his sons or the grill cook or the waitresses or the dishwasher or your neighbors (or, if you didn't feel like talking, no one bothered you), the jukebox played, you asked for the check, you paid—never very much, no credit cards—and you vacated your seat knowing that it would soon be filled. If you'd come in happy, you tended to leave happier. If you'd come in unhappy, you might very well leave unhappy, but that wouldn't be Joe's fault. Nobody left hungry.

It was Joe's fault, though that seems an odd way of putting it, that everyone in Lee, Massachusetts, took him for granted. Starting in 1955, he stayed open round the clock, except for major holidays and a sixteen-hour interval every Sunday, from 3 A.M. to 7 P.M. After thirty-three years of that, he cut back, closing all day Sunday and at six-thirty Saturday evening. Still, six mornings a week the place opened at five-thirty, and Monday through Friday closing time was midnight. Workers at the paper mills—Lee had six in 1955, and five continue to operate—could get breakfast before the 7 A.M.-to-3 P.M. shift or dinner after the 3-to-11. Actually, you could order breakfast any time of day, and, if you felt like Salisbury steak, potatoes, gravy, and cauliflower at sunrise, that was O.K., too. The litany of Joe's daily specials—Monday (roast beef), Tuesday (meat loaf, roast turkey, chicken breasts), Wednesday (roast pork, spareribs, stuffed peppers), Thursday (corned beef and cabbage), Friday (fish, fried chicken, veal cutlets), Saturday (baked ham)—was as familiar as a Rosary.

Presumably, people in Lee, if pressed, would have conceded the possibility that Joe might someday decide he'd had enough, but what was the advantage of dwelling on a thought like that? You could say that the whole town was in a state of denial. Or perhaps they'd all been lulled into a blissful tortellini-soup-induced inertia. Who could blame them? At the margins of plausibility, yes, one could contemplate a modified Joe-less Joe's Diner, but it was a soft-landing scenario in which Joe's sons Mike and Frank took over, Paul and Alice still worked at the grill, Jackie and Evelyn and Margaret still waitressed, Dottie washed dishes, the menu and the prices didn't change, and a couple of times a day Joe, in his emeritus capacity, would drop by for a bite or a cup of coffee. It was when you tried conjuring a Lee that was Joe's Diner-less, period, that you strayed



Joe Sorrentino's diner looked as if it came straigh into the realm of the truly unthinkable.

Residents of the postcard-perfect towns and villages of New England have had to defend their landscapes not only against the garden-variety American strip-mall virus but also against the risk of getting strangled by their own quaint charms. At some point—broadly speaking, this would have been after the industrial revolution and before the invention of the Walkman—the Berkshire hills of western Massachusetts became a fair-weather destination for urban and suburban New Yorkers whose collective urge to get away from it all spawned, in towns like Stockbridge and Lenox, and especially on the roads leading to Tanglewood and Jacob's Pillow, the chronic traffic jams that give cultural uplift a bad name. Somehow, Lee, a blue-collar heart-of-the-Berkshires town without pretensions, was less afflicted with these annoyances. One thing Lee had going for it was Joe's Diner, and in a sense Joe's Diner *was* Lee. Without too much of a stretch, you could even say that the diner was America. In 1958, what became a famous Norman Rockwell image—a friendly cop and a would-be runaway boy, a hobo's bindle at his feet, eying each other from adjacent stools at the counter of a diner, with the counterman looking on—illustrated the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post*. Rockwell, who lived in Stockbridge and was an occasional customer, had composed the drawing with Joe's Diner in mind. Ever since, first-time visitors had been coming in, arranging themselves on those same stools, and asking Joe to pose for photographs. There were citizens of Lee, diner regulars, who adjusted their eating schedules (or ordered takeout meals) during the summer, when a line on the sidewalk outside Joe's was a common sight. But, inside, a foamy egalitarianism prevailed, the tourists and the locals mixing as smoothly as a banana shake. Everyone felt legitimately entitled to feel proprietary about Joe's. Which is to say that if the cloud of calamity that hovered over the diner early last month—when the rarely deployed "Sorry, We're Closed" sign was hung in the front window and stayed there—had materialized in July instead of January, the sense of desolation that pervaded Lee might very well have triggered a mental-health crisis as far away as the Upper West Side of Manhattan.

Nobody felt worse about this turn of events than Joe did. He'd spent his entire life in Lee, and he had an unblinking sense of civic duty. Since 1939, when he was seven years old, a diner had anchored the two-story clapboard building at the end of Main Street, where Lee's central commercial district tapered and the road curved, crossing the railroad tracks and continuing north toward Lenox and Pittsfield. It was a strategic location, situated next door to the Schweitzer paper mill. Joe's father worked at the mill, and the family lived three blocks away. As kids, Joe and his friends would go to the diner, which was owned by Happy Navin, and play pinball until Happy shooed them out. Before the Massachusetts Turnpike opened, the diner was on the truck route to and from Boston, so Happy stayed open twenty-four hours. In 1950, he sold the business to Leo Gatewood, and five years later, at the age of twenty-two, Joe bought it from Leo.

Joe's business cards, like Joe himself, were good-humored and matter-of-fact. "Where the Elite Meet to Shoot the Sheet," they said. Also, "Best Food in Town." Partly because of the diner's provenance as a truck stop, and also because the mill workers could trade their meal tickets there, in the early years it had a reputation as a man's place. A housewife who didn't feel like cooking would send her husband or her son to pick up dinner, but women didn't really feel at home at Joe's until the mid-sixties. The exceptions were the waitresses, including Joe's Aunt Angelina and his wife, Theresa, who, when she wasn't busy looking after their kids—eventually, there were

ut of a Norman Rockwell painting—but it was the other way around. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

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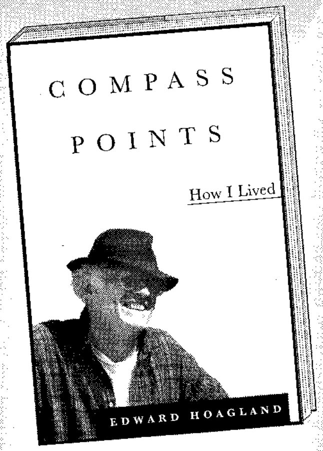

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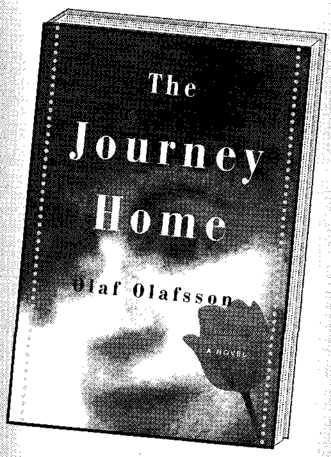

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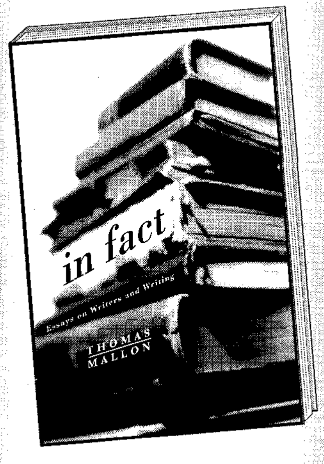

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pointing pell-mell, divining the Great Field. Fear neither
live birth nor hatching!
                    Oh, revelation only ever comes
at sudden crossings—the heart hopping like a happy frog.

—*Maurice Manning*

seven—toiled at the grill and was as distinctive a presence as Joe. At one time or another, every member of the family worked in the diner, all guided by a simple precept. "My father made it very clear," Joe, Jr., the eldest son, said recently. "When you came to work you didn't come to play. You didn't come to talk on the phone or eat lunch or have breakfast. You came to work. Because if you didn't work he had to work even harder."

The children attended parochial school at St. Mary's, the same parish where they went to Mass every Sunday, and finished up at Lee High School. Senior year, the Sorrentino children confronted a choice: Joe would foot the bill for college or they could have the cash. The oldest, and the only girl, Debbie, opted for college, as did the three youngest boys, Robert, Sam, and Pete. In 1977, Joe, Jr., and Mike graduated from Lee High and began putting in eighty-hour weeks at the diner, and three years later Frank joined them. (In time, Joe, Jr., began moonlighting at a hobby shop he'd opened a hundred yards from the diner, and ten years ago he decided to make that his sole occupation.)

During the mid-nineties, a publicly subsidized, smartly un-yuppified face-lift of downtown Lee took place—new street lights, sidewalks with brick borders, storefront upgrades. While Joe happily accepted a grant that helped pay for new clapboards on one side of the building and new windows on the second floor, everyone knew better than to tamper with the diner's cedar-and-red-brick façade or the illuminated Pepsi sign above the entrance. And the interior, of course, was absolutely untouchable: the gray-and-black checkerboard linoleum-tile floor; Masonite walls (including one festooned with snapshots of happy eaters, many wearing Joe's Diner sweatshirts and T-shirts in faraway places—Indonesia, Australia, China, Russia, Bulgaria, Antarctica); brown plastic-laminated tables; orange-and-yellow molded-plastic chairs; red vinyl-capped swivel stools; counter with creamy swirl-patterned Formica veneer; crucifix hanging over the thermostat, beneath the menu board ("Hamburger—$1, Cheeseburger—$1.25, Sausage Grinder—$2.50"); Tums, Juicy Fruit, LifeSavers, RoiTan cigars, and Red Man chewing tobacco on the shelves next to the cash register; photograph of Joe with Mitzi Gaynor and Johnny Ray, taken in his pre-diner days, when he was an Army cook stationed in California and a Hollywood-cameraman uncle invited him on the set of "There's No Business Like Show Business"; shots of Joe posing with homage-paying politicians (Michael Dukakis, John Kerry, William Weld); photograph of Father Gary, from St. Mary's, taken at the Vat-

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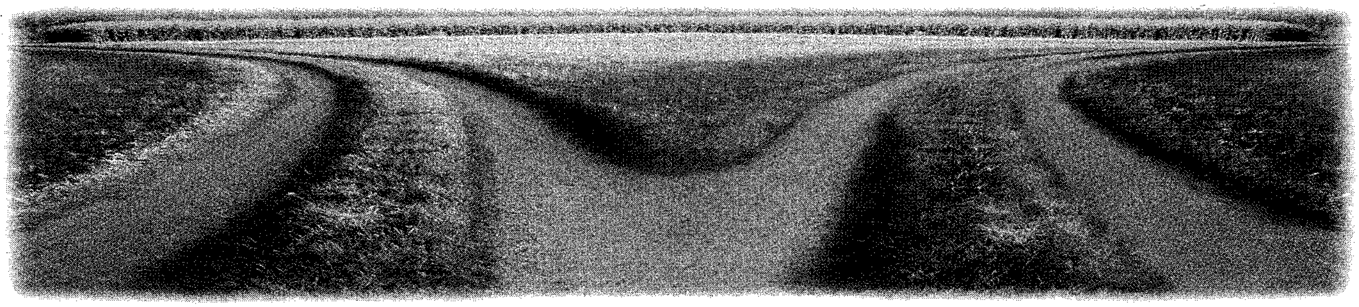

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ican with the Holy Father, which inevitably prompted the question "Joe, you mean even the Pope eats here?" No right-minded person would have dreamed of altering a molecule of it.

So one can charitably assume a certain sheepishness on the part of inspectors from the Tri-Town Health Department who, three months ago, informed Joe that he would have to make some changes. Forty-five years in business, and he'd never been cited for a health-code violation, but new rules were new rules. The code said you needed a sink reserved exclusively for employees to wash their hands, you needed grease traps in the basins where pots and pans were cleaned, an automatic dishwasher would have to be installed. Joe had faith in his own exacting standards; grease traps or not, no restaurant in Berkshire County could boast a more hygienic kitchen. His position on a dishwasher had always been why buy one when you can hire one. Obeying the Health Department edict would necessitate tearing apart a workplace where space was extremely tight and everything functioned according to a precise choreography.

The inspectors were willing to give Joe six months to comply, but he didn't need that long to plot his next move. A few weeks before their visit, he'd been hospitalized with pneumonia, emerging just in time to arrange the funeral of his only sibling, an older sister. He no longer had the stamina to be on his feet fourteen hours a day. His knees were killing him, his blood-sugar level wasn't where it belonged. He recalled his honeymoon, in 1956, when he and Theresa drove to New York City in a fire-engine-red Chevy convertible, spent three nights at the Taft Hotel and another three in Atlantic City, and returned to Lee at six o'clock on a Saturday evening, an hour before he went back to work at the diner. They took their next vacation, a week-long Caribbean cruise, twenty-nine years later. The time had arrived for yet another, of the permanent variety.

Joe offered the business to Mike and Frank, but they, too, had had enough. The idea of a fresh start appealed to Mike; he was forty-one, with a wife and four children whom he saw too little of, and he wanted to get into real estate. For years, Frank, who was also married, had done maintenance work on the diner building, which had four commercial tenants, and he'd acquired several other customers around town. Now he could turn that into a full-fledged enterprise and make his own hours.

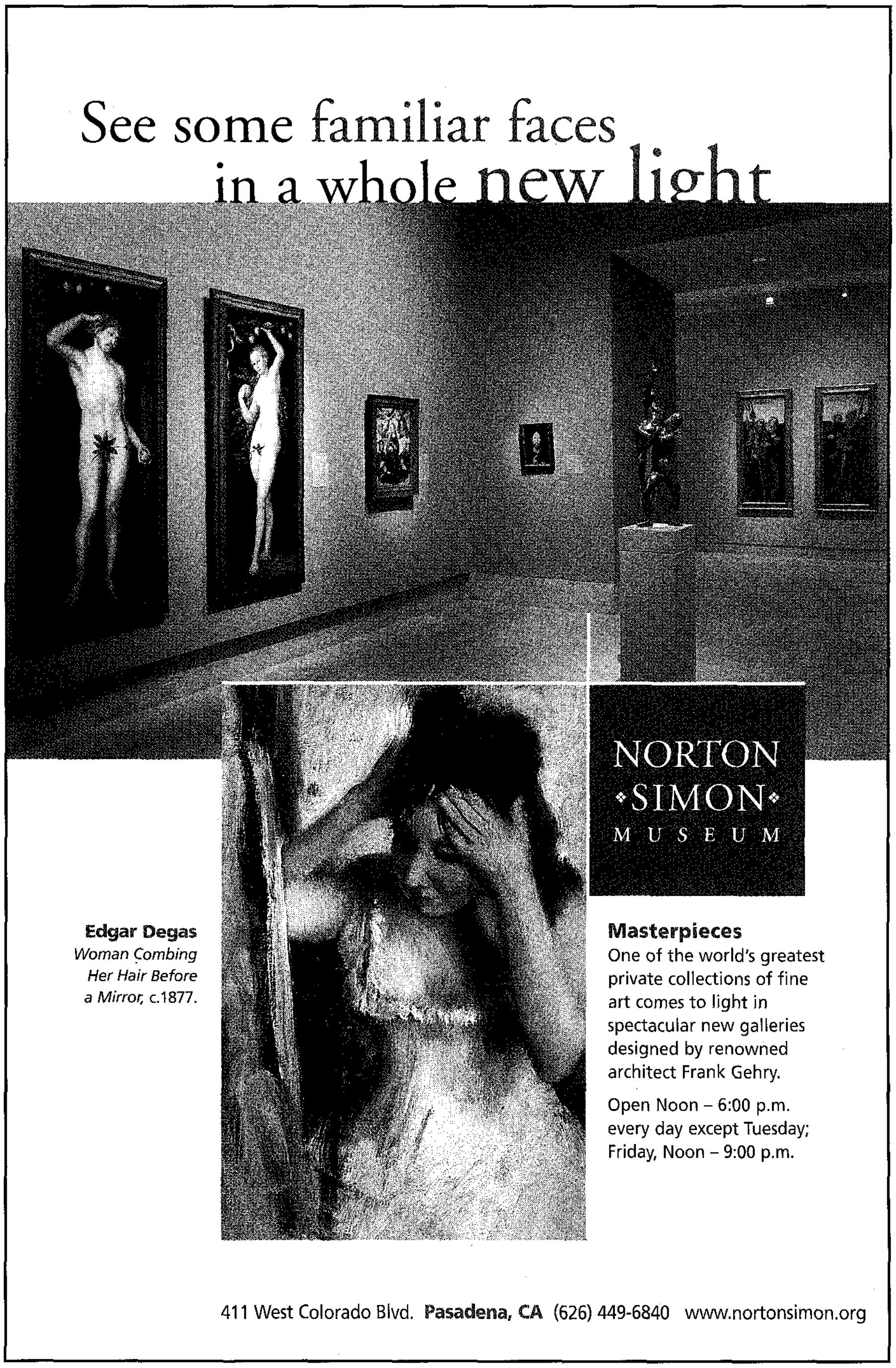
The news that Joe's Diner was for sale appeared in the Berkshire *Eagle*, a daily paper published in Pittsfield, in early November. Television and radio stations in Boston and Albany picked it up, and the phone started ringing. Considering the value of the name alone, Joe's hundred-thousand-dollar asking price seemed as cheap as his menu prices. ("We make friends, not money," he liked to say whenever customers marvelled that he charged only six or seven bucks for a full dinner.) The first serious buyer to show up was a nurse from Pittsfield named Ramona Hamilton. Though she had no experience running a restaurant—much less running a diner à la Joe—she had a sister and a brother who planned to get involved, plus lots of friends who wanted to help out, so he agreed to sell it to her. For five weeks, Ramona observed Joe and the staff in action. During that time, she didn't do much cooking, but Joe described his preparation methods step by step, and she wrote it all down.

The next to last day of the year, a Saturday, was Joe, Mike, and Frank's last day on the premises. When the diner reopened under new management, on January 2nd, a reporter from the Berkshire *Record*, a weekly, came around and wrote a friendly changing-of-the-guard story. Ramona was quoted as saying ("with a chuckle"), "It's been a harder day than any I ever had at Berkshire Medical Center, and I worked in intensive care." By the time the story was published, three days later, she was no longer in the diner business. In the wake of her startlingly abrupt departure, there was speculation that Ramona had been defeated by the exigencies of preparing the Thursday special, corned beef and cabbage, which was widely regarded as Joe's pièce de résistance. It seems more likely that she realized what she'd got into, in general, and had a vision of herself imminently back in intensive care, as a patient. The staff received calls telling them that they were no longer employed, and Joe's lawyer got a call telling him that the purchase agreement, which hadn't yet been consummated, wasn't going to be. Ramona exited in such haste that she left behind the spiral-bound computer-printed notes of all the instructions Joe had given her. When he found it, he said, more or less with a chuckle, "Yeah, I should hold on to that. Someday I might want to open up a diner."

By the time I went to Lee to get a status report, the inhabitants had spent almost two weeks coping with the town's new identity as the erstwhile home of Joe's Diner. Joe, a fleshy, pleasantly handsome fellow in his late sixties, with swept-back black hair that was gray at the temples, thick eyebrows, and dark-brown eyes, agreed to meet me at the diner. The mood inside was crepuscular, and the air felt chilly. I sat at the counter, Joe stationed himself in his accustomed position, on the other side, and we spoke for several hours, during which he made it plain that he failed to detect much humor in the situation. On the topic of Ramona Hamilton, he was circumspect; he felt bad, she felt bad, and he didn't want to say anything that would hurt anyone's feelings. He happened to be negotiating with a new potential buyer, and if the lawyers could agree on certain details the place might be up and running again any day. But he still couldn't get over the tormenting fact that he'd been a party to circumstances that had deprived innocent victims of their weekly rations of home-fried potatoes, scrod Sorrentino, and sparerib patties on hard rolls.

"It hurts," he said. "This place has never been closed since 1939. Now it's closed. Say you're used to coming here every night. Now you've got to find another place. You do that, and you're going there two or three weeks. You hear that Joe's sold his place, but you don't know who the new owners are, and you're happy with your new place, so you wind up staying there."

The import of his remarks—the notion that forty-five years' worth of accumulated good will could disappear in a matter of days—struck me as highly unlikely. Too many people in Lee depended on the diner as much for fellowship as for sustenance. The reality was that the townsfolk wanted a diner called Joe's Diner just as it was, and stood ready to give the benefit of the doubt to anyone with a clear-eyed grasp of how hard the Sorrentinos had worked



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In the midst of Joe's lamentations, Theresa dropped in—a small woman with intelligent eyes, a halo of gray curls, and the bemused contentment of someone who hadn't needed to travel far to see it all. Any competent new operator who had enough common sense to rehire Joe's old staff would do fine, she said. "As soon as the customers find out that your help is back, they're going to come back."

Joe looked at her with a mixture of hope and skepticism, and after she'd left he said, "You know, I never sat down here and ate a meal. I'd go home for that. Theresa prepared dinner every night."

Mike Sorrentino, who had been around for most of the conversation, said, "I'd leave here at two or three in the morning and go home and eat."

"If people came in and saw us sitting down, then we weren't putting out their dinner," Joe continued. "I wouldn't let those guys"—Mike or Frank—"cut the meat to put on the dish. I'd push them out of the way. I had to make it look good, make sure they got the right cut. If I know you're a big eater, I'll give you a bigger cut. If you come in here and don't eat everything, next time you get less. Until I know your capacity. Because I don't like to see food wasted. You see some guy six-six, you've got to put a half pound of meat on there, for six bucks. Every time the girls took an order, I had to know who it was for."

Mike: "You knew how each customer liked their food."

Joe: "Don't other places do that?"

The next time I saw Joe, six days later, a large cardboard "Open" sign had been taped to the front window and his spirits had greatly improved. We met back at the diner in the late morning, as the early-lunch crowd was arriving; it was a Tuesday, tortellini-soup day. In the meantime, he'd closed a deal to sell the place to people whom, in retrospect, he realized he should have approached in the first place—two brothers, Chuck and Gordon Hebler, and their partner, Terry Shapiro. They had successful restaurants in Lenox and Pittsfield, and many years of experience catering backstage at big rock concerts and stadium shows. When the diner reopened, the previous day, Joe and Mike and Frank were all present and in uniform—short-sleeved white shirt, white apron, black-and-white checked trousers—because they'd agreed to work for a week, explaining the ins and outs. All the old help was back except for Margaret MacDowell, who'd taken a job at the paper mill next door. As regular customers repatriated, Joe introduced them to the new guys, who said all the right things: they might cut back the nighttime hours a bit, but otherwise everything would remain the same.

Everything that was supposed to happen on a Tuesday did. Aldo Pascucci, one of the town selectmen, came in for the tortellini soup, and he and Joe agreed that his recent bout with the flu could probably have been avoided if he hadn't gone soupless for two weeks. Joseph Scapin, Sr., from Lee Hardware Store, sat at the counter with his grandson, ordered a meat-loaf sandwich, and went through a familiar routine with a waitress named Pat Read: he asked how her dog was, she said the dog was fine, and he urged her to deliver it to the kitchen because he had an appetite for what he called "polenta bow-wow." Charlie Flint, an antique dealer, sat at a table and ordered a dish named after himself, the Charlie Chef Salad.

"She reminded me of you!"

"Hey, Charlie, how ya doin'?" Joe greeted him.

"You smell like mothballs," Charlie replied. "But, you know, Joe, you look rested."

I stuck around until dinner because I wanted to meet the Higgins brothers, Bill and John, eighty-one-year-old twins who for almost twenty years had been making the trip from Pittsfield five nights a week. They always sat at the end of the counter, where there was a photograph on the wall that showed them in that exact spot. As they were settling on their stools, Jackie Nicholas approached and wordlessly put out paper napkins, silverware, glasses of water, and buttered bread. Bill had just tucked the napkin into his crewneck sweater when she delivered two plates of salad, followed by turkey, mashed potatoes, broccoli, and cranberry sauce, and a small pitcher of yellow gravy. When I asked how she knew to bring the turkey and not the meat-loaf special, Bill said, "Last night they asked us. We told them."

Joe dropped by. "You gotta eat what's on the table," he said. "Just like home."

"Right, Joe," Bill said.

The light had dimmed outside, and, without anyone's having touched a switch, it seemed brighter inside. The diner was almost full now. Doris Day had come on the jukebox, singing "Whatever Will Be Will Be." "Once I know these guys have been fed, I can go home," Joe told me. He disappeared into the kitchen, and when he came out he was wearing a blue windbreaker and a Yankees cap.

"You be in tomorrow?" he asked the Higgins brothers—a rhetorical question.

"Yeah," Bill said. "Roast pork."

"O.K.," Joe said. "I'll see you tomorrow." ♦

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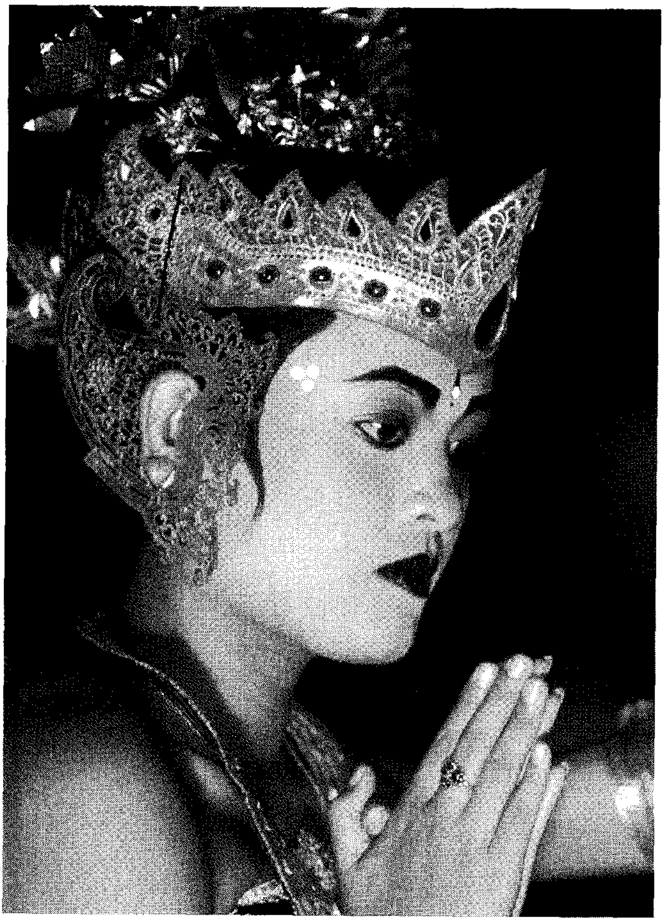
As Americans travel more frequently, many are eschewing overly choreographed itineraries, and opting instead for a more authentic experience, even if they have to travel great distances to get it.

"Basically, what you've seen in the last ten years is a movement away from collecting places, and a movement toward collecting cultures," says Keith Bellows, who logs more than a hundred thousand miles a year as *National Geographic Traveler's* editor. Cultural travel is becoming so popular, in fact, that it is no longer viewed as just a "niche market," explains Cathy Keefe, a spokesperson for the Travel Industry Association of America (TIA). According to a recent TIA study, more than sixty-five million Americans per year visit a historic site or a museum or attend a multicultural event. The study found that, on average, Americans who take culture-oriented trips tend to take longer vacations and spend more dollars on them than other travellers.

> ". . . a movement away from collecting places, and a movement toward collecting cultures."

mind trips

by geoff yennie



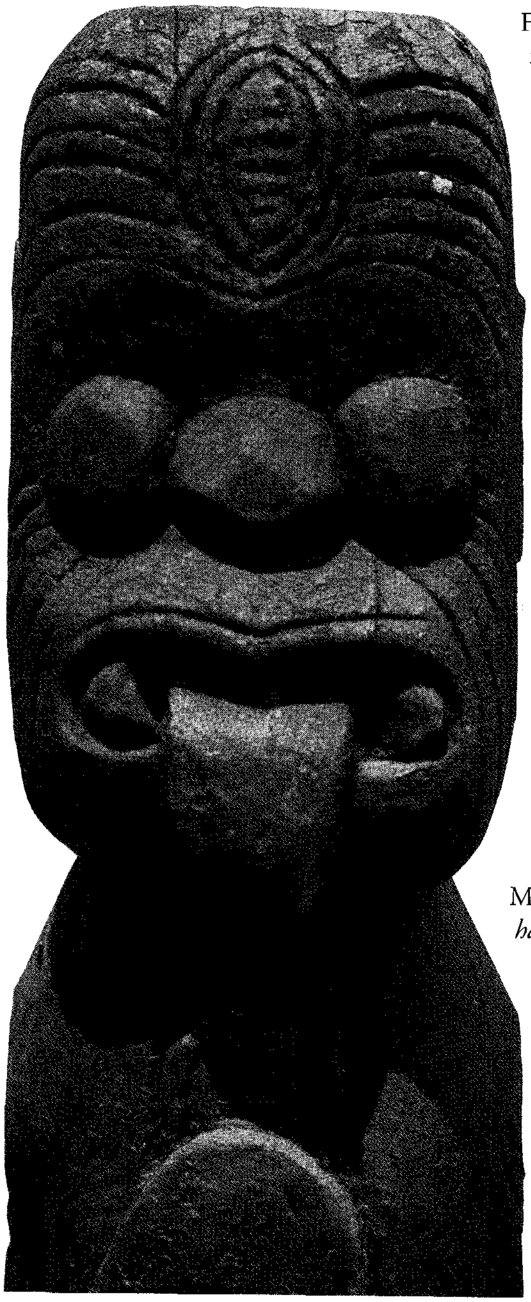
© Sergio Dorantes/Corbis

"The sheer volume of travellers interested in art and history, along with their spending habits, travel patterns, and demographics, leaves no doubt that culture is now a significant part of the U.S. travel experience," says TIA president William S. Norman.

Of course, "culture" and "travel" mean different things to different people. Some want a cultural experience. Members of this group are observers and spend their trips museum and gallery hopping in as many cities as possible. Or they attend concerts, plays, or films at an annual festival in a favorite country. Those who seek to experience a culture first hand are participants, and attain their goal by taking vacations that allow them to interact and work closely with indigenous peoples. For example, they may want to paint, perform, or even cook in different ethnic styles.

Whatever a traveller's interest, the value of a journey hinges on its authenticity, which can be elusive in a world that is inundated with American pop culture. Finding a genuine experience requires research, flexibility, and a willingness to move beyond the limitations imposed by being a cultural outsider. "You have to be willing to go farther afield. Pushing that boundary is a way to have a truly authentic experience," Bellows says. The good news is that travel agencies and tourism boards in the United States and around the world are now catering to both kinds of cultural travellers—the observers and the participants.

Authenticity can be elusive in a world inundated with American pop culture.

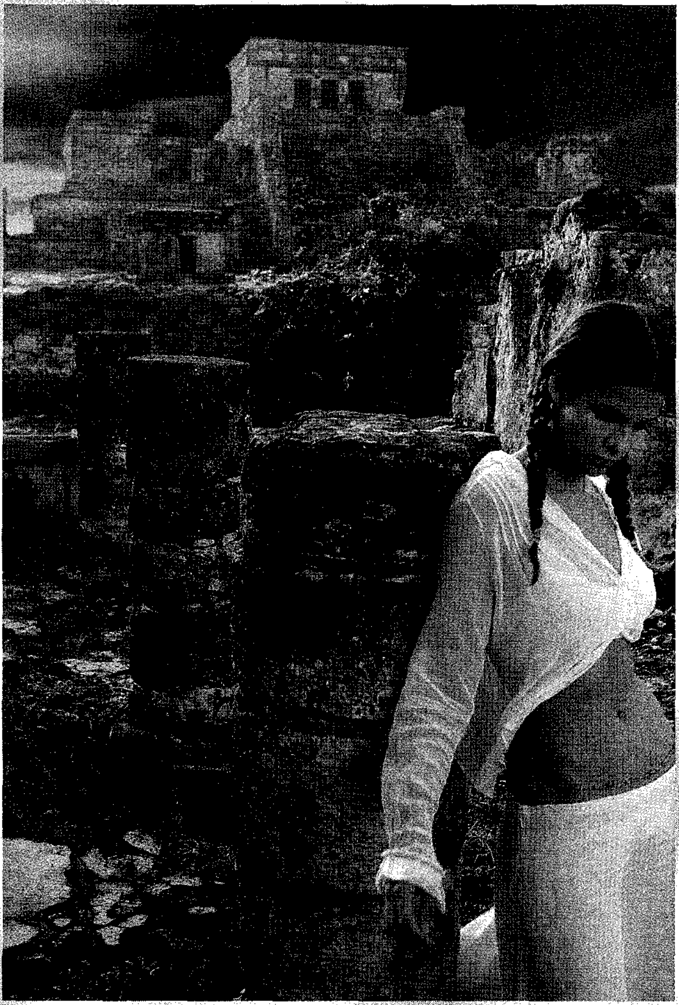


Maori carving © Paul A. Souders/Corbis

kiwi consciousness

Many Americans are visiting New Zealand for a taste of summer during the long North American winter (the seasons are reversed in the southern hemisphere). New Zealand culture is flavored by the Maori people, who came to New Zealand from neighboring Polynesia a millennium ago. Though they dominated the country for hundreds of years, they now make up only about ten per cent of the population. Tours of the North Island regularly include a stop in Rotorua, a geothermal area, where it is possible to visit a Maori *marae* (meeting house) and attend a *hangi* (feast), featuring a performance of traditional Maori songs and dances. Travellers who want to experience more of Maori life can head to Opotoki and the rugged East Cape of the North Island. There, opportunities abound to meet locals and buy authentic art, bone, and *pounamu* (greenstone carvings).

New Zealand is a complex cultural destination with thriving film and music scenes, inventive theatre,



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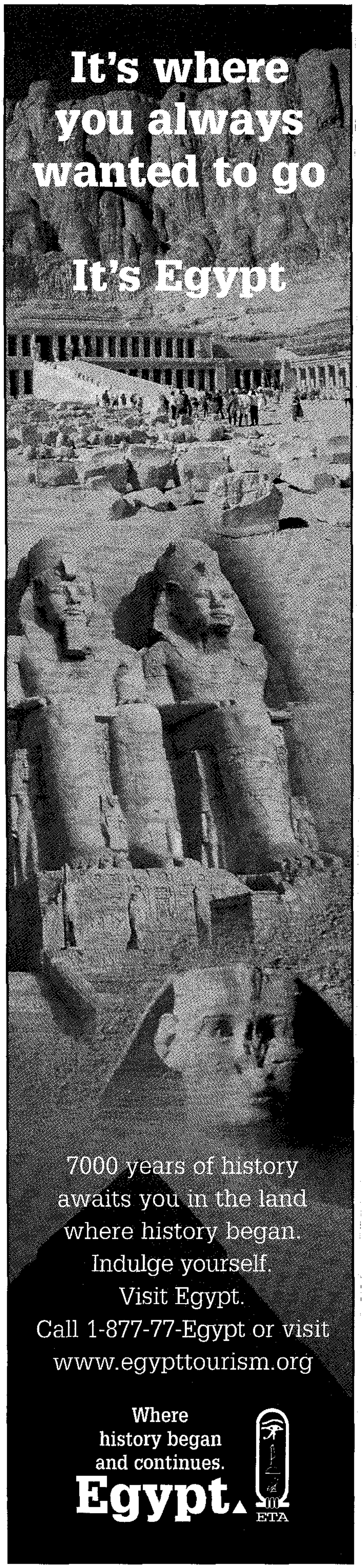

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award-winning wine regions, unique museums and galleries, and world-class opera. (With less than four million people, the country gave the world Dame Kiri Te Kanawa and Frances Alda, to name just two of at least twenty internationally known Kiwi opera stars.)

New Zealand has long been committed to strong support for the arts. For example, the government recently allocated the equivalent of thirty-eight million dollars to stimulate national creativity. Culture seekers may enjoy a New Zealand Opera (011-64-4-499-8343) staging of the rarely performed "Manon" by Jules Massenet in April and May. Architecture buffs will want to visit pastel Napier in the North Island's Hawkes Bay, a largely undiscovered Art Deco city in the heart of one of the country's wine regions.

But it is the South Island city of Christchurch that positively oozes art. City life revolves around the Arts Centre (011-64-3-366-0989), a Victorian building on Worcester Street that's located just blocks from the Botanical Gardens (011-64-3-366-1701) for which Christchurch is best known. Cultural participants can immerse themselves in weekly art markets or join the activities of the city's eighteenth annual Summertimes Festival (011-64-3-372-2840), which runs through the end of March. Features include ongoing theatre, gardening, and food and wine festivals, as well as an Asian festival and a costume exhibition at the Canterbury Museum.

The South Island city of Christchurch positively oozes art.

the many moods of ireland

It has been said that Ireland resembles New Zealand, both scenically and culturally. Both countries are lush and green, and some seventeen per cent of New Zealanders are of Irish descent. And like New Zealand, Ireland is struggling to blend its ancient traditions with a new, high-tech economy and a young, urban populace.

The contrast between old and new Ireland will be vivid to anyone in search of the authentic Irish experience. On one hand, there is cosmopolitan Dublin that lives up to its billing as a sophisticated metropolis, with world-class art museums, vibrant theatre, packed concert halls, and stunning architecture. But Ireland also has a rich history and distinct national identity that can be explored in places like the rural Dingle Peninsula in County Kerry (011-353-66-7151188), where Gaelic is spoken in the shops as often as the Queen's English. Gaelic classes are plentiful for those with the time to enroll, and cultural travellers can spend weeks perusing some two thousand archeological sites in the area and never be bored.

courtesy of Irish Tourist Board

Ireland also has a quirky side that both observers and participants should seek out. An annual matchmaking festival

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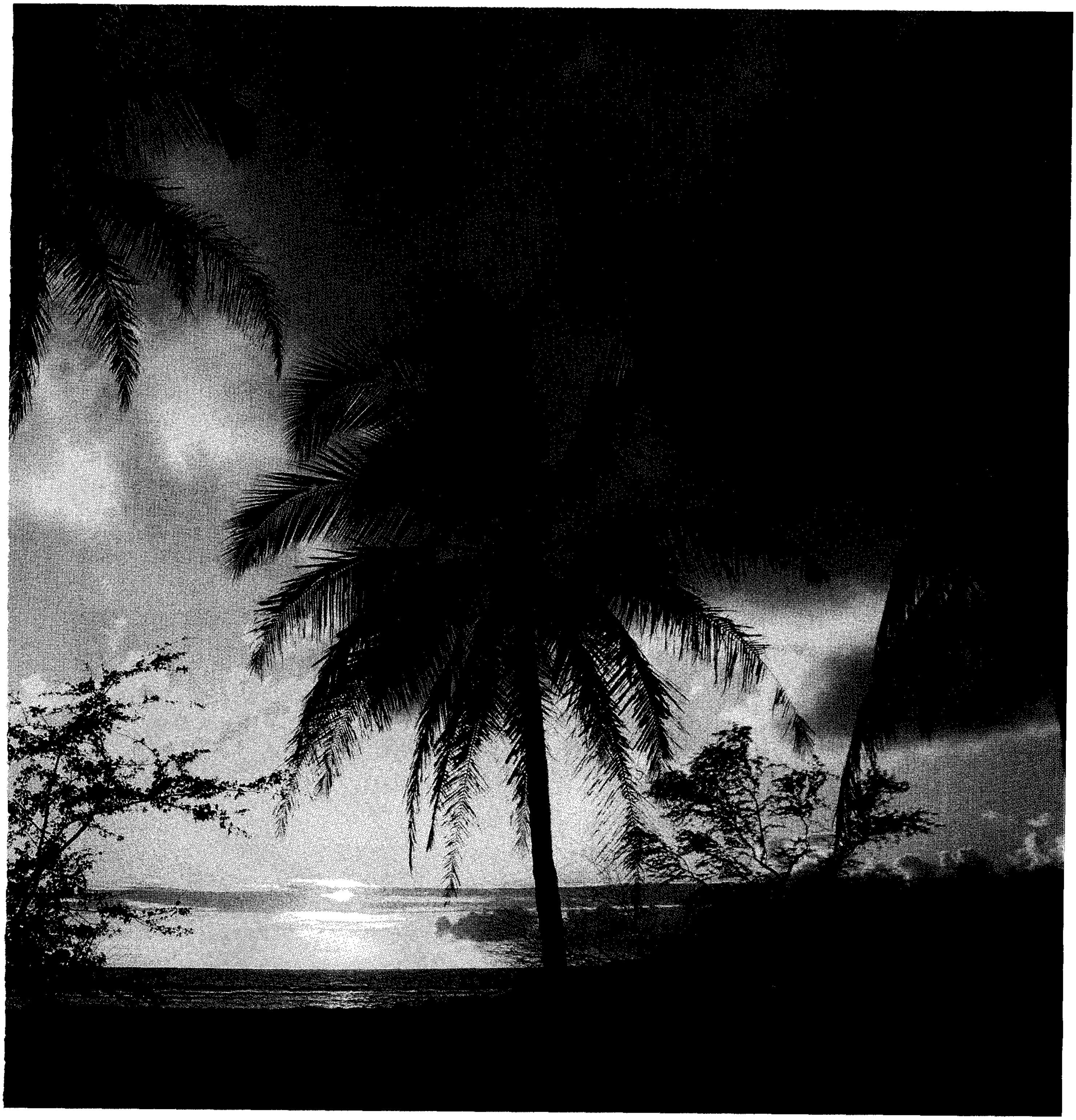

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(011-353-65-7074005) that dates back 150 years is held from August through October in the County Clare town of Lisdoonvarna. Some five thousand people—far more men than women—come to town to dance, mingle, and drink pints of Guinness. Nearby Doolin is something of a center for Irish music, which is played every night in its three pubs—McDermott's, O'Connor's, and McGann's. So popular and overrun with tourists has the hamlet of Doolin become that the quality of the music, at least in the opinion of some locals, is in danger of dwindling.

An Irish experience doesn't get more authentic than the annual St. Patrick's Festival in Dublin (011-353-16763205). The large carnival that has become Ireland's biggest cultural celebration—complete with fireworks, street performers, concerts, and the grandest annual celebration of Irish dance in the world—will transform downtown Dublin from March 16th to 19th.

euro beat

The St. Patrick's festivities herald the beginning of the festival season in Europe. The spectacular Spoleto Festival in Umbria, Italy, from June 28th to July 15th (011-39-0743-220320) features opera, chamber music, and symphonies. In July, Aix-en-Provence puts on the Festival International d'Art Lyrique (011-33-4-42-17-34-34), a rousing celebration of opera and concerts held in the courtyard of the archbishop's former palace. And the five-week Salzburg Festival of Music and Drama in Austria (011-43-662-8045, Ext. 579) begins July 21st.

courtesy of Jazz in Marciac

One of the ironies of travel is the extent to which Americans encounter one of their country's greatest art forms—jazz music—while travelling abroad. The Continent is awash with important jazz festivals, which in the past have helped to immortalize American greats such as Miles Davis, Ella Fitzgerald, Chet Baker, and others. This summer, Wynton Marsalis, Joshua Redman, and Pat Metheny are scheduled for European tours. In Austria, the Vienna Jazz Festival (011-43-1 5035647) will be held in late June. France's Jazz à Vienne (011-33-4-74-78-87-87) is staged from June 29th to July 13th, while its Jazz in Marciac (011-33-5-62-09-38-03) takes place in a thirteenth-century Gascony *bastide* (fortified town) from August 2nd to 15th. This year, Italy's Umbria Jazz Festival (011-39-075-5732432) occurs from July 13th to 22nd in Perugia, an exquisite town in the hilly "green heart" of Italy.

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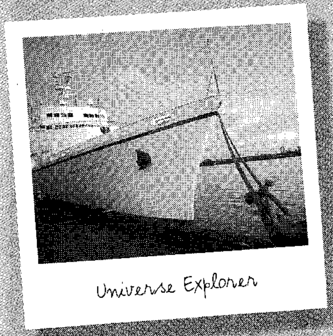

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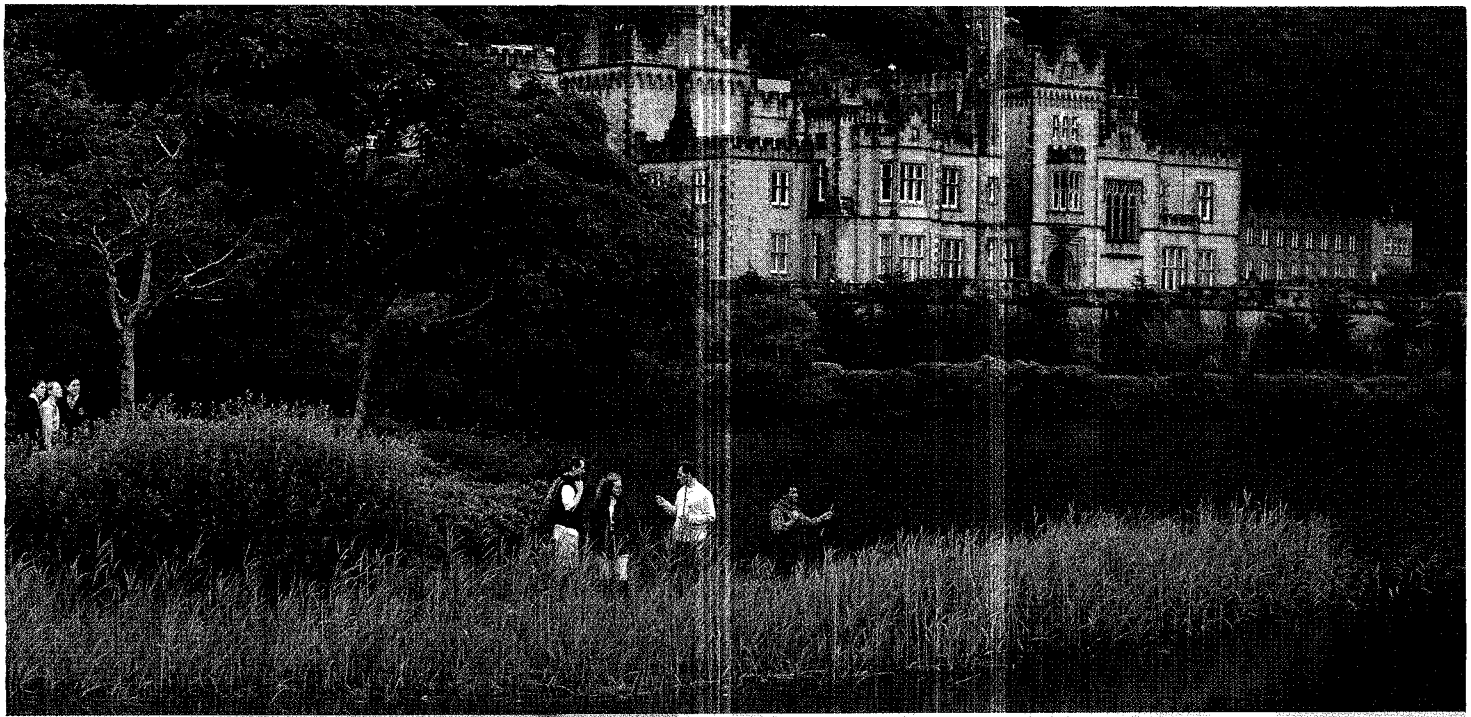

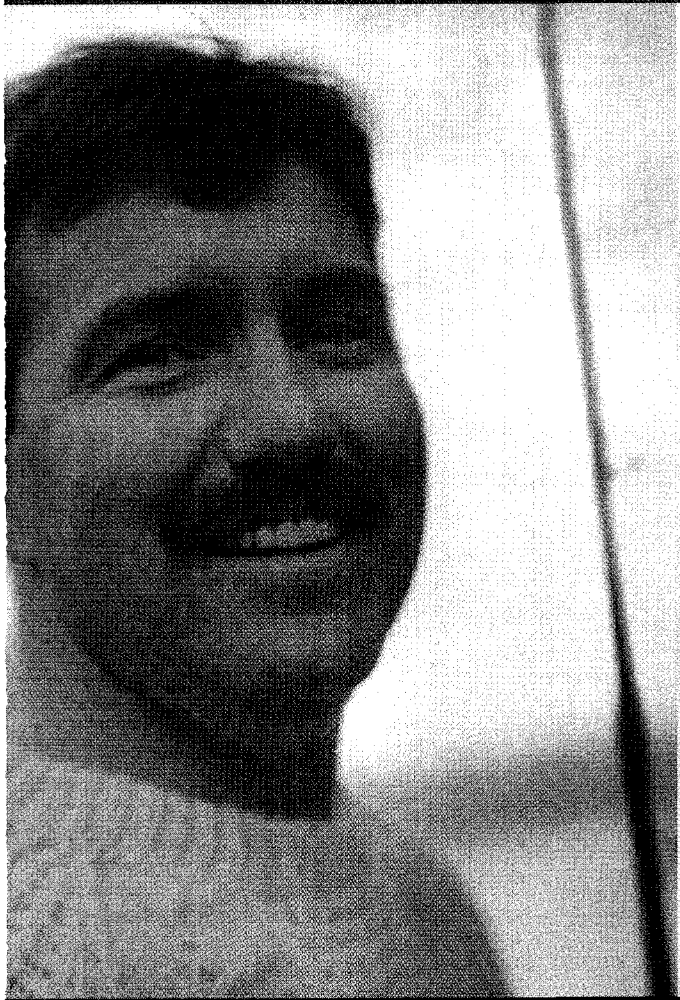

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untamed revelry

Closer to home and perhaps more lighthearted is the Pirates Week Festival (345-949-5078) in the Cayman Islands from October 26th through November 4th. It comes complete with a pirate ship landing, live Caribbean music, sporting events, and a parade of floats to commemorate the islands' heritage. The Cayman Islands are also a good place to be in April because that's when the national cultural and arts festival, Cayfest (345-949-5477), showcases its local talent. The country also stages its own version of Carnival (345-949-8000), complete with a masquerade parade in May—an event known as Batabano.

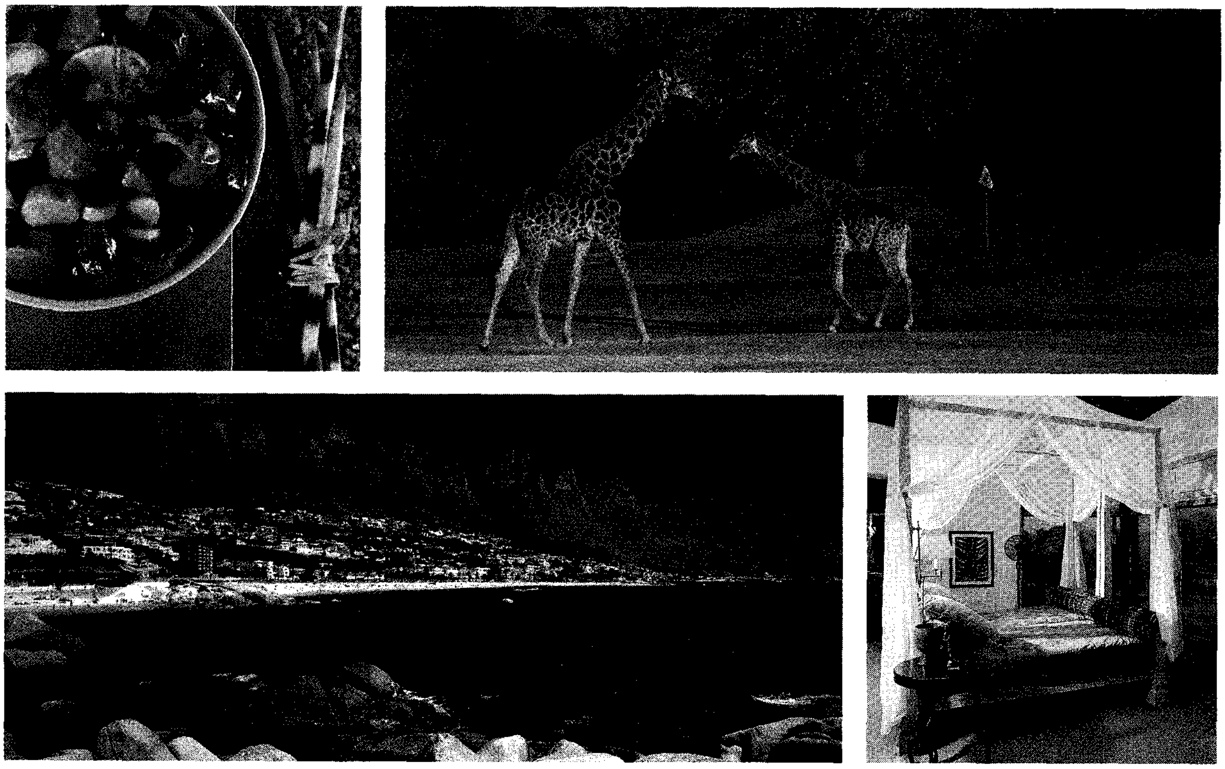
Religious festivals provide an opportunity to gain intimate access to a culture. It's Carnaval time in much of the world as Ash Wednesday approaches on February 28th. Though Mardi Gras is usually considered the domain of New Orleans and Rio de Janeiro, Carnaval is also huge in Mexico, a predominantly Roman Catholic region. The Mexican city of Mazatlán in the state of Sinaloa, for example, throws the third largest pre-Lenten fiesta in the world (011-52-69-165160).

Mexicans love fiestas, and attending one is a way to become acquainted with Mexico's culture first hand—an experience not always available in the popular seaside resorts that cater solely to gringos. Such resorts are ideal for a sybaritic beach vacation, but those seeking a genuine Mexican cultural experience may feel trapped in tourist compounds that are cut off from the real Mexico. Venturing into the Mexican countryside requires a sense of adventure as well as a good guidebook, but the rewards can be tremendous.

Religious festivals permit intimate access to a culture.

© AFP/Corbis

One of the best times to experience Mexico is during the important and widely observed religious period called Semana Santa or Easter Holy Week. From Palm Sunday to Easter, visitors to virtually every Mexican town and village can attend and often participate in special masses and processions commemorating the



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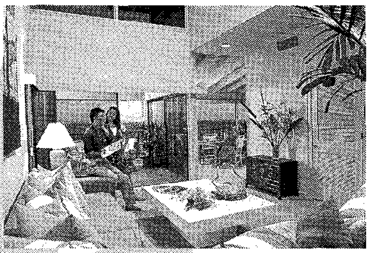

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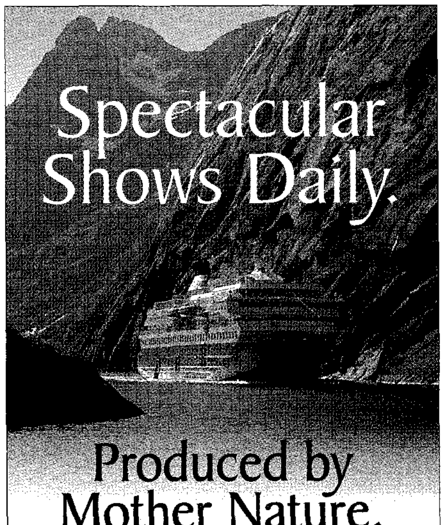

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entry of Jesus to Jerusalem. Other biblical milestones, including reënactments of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, are also depicted.

Fascinating religious rituals are not the only reason for Mexico's popularity as a destination for cultural travellers. History buffs are drawn to its ancient ruins like the lost city of Paquimé (011-52-14-293421) that the Spaniards called Casas Grandes when they discovered it in the fifteen-hundreds. The ruins, which date to the eighth century, are located in the northern Mexican state of Chihuahua, home of the revolutionary Pancho Villa and only a three-hour drive from El Paso. It is a region that has been largely overlooked by tourists, who generally flock to the Mayan ruins on the Yucatán peninsula (011-52-99-248282). The lack of crowds at Paquimé permits those who visit to make an intimate inspection of the ruins, which were excavated in the nineteen-fifties and now rise dramatically above the desert as a labyrinth of walls.

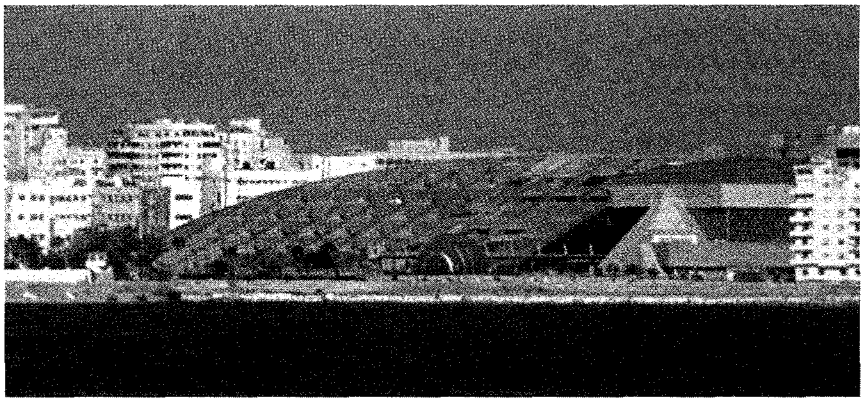
The ruins are both mysterious and complex—no one has figured out why the Paquimeans fashioned mushroom-shaped doorways—and they demonstrate a surprising level of sophistication in terms of city planning. Other archeological marvels abound in Chihuahua, including the Valley of the Caves, which documents human occupation dating from 5500 B.C., and harbors some of the oldest ruins in the country.

A good overview of Mexican archeological sites can be found at the National Museum of Anthropology in Mexico City (011-52-5-553-6386), which is considered the finest museum of its kind in the world. The Mexican government has just reopened Chapultepec Castle (011-52-5-553-6268) in the capital, and has spent more than two years refurbishing the former presidential palace, now the country's national history museum.

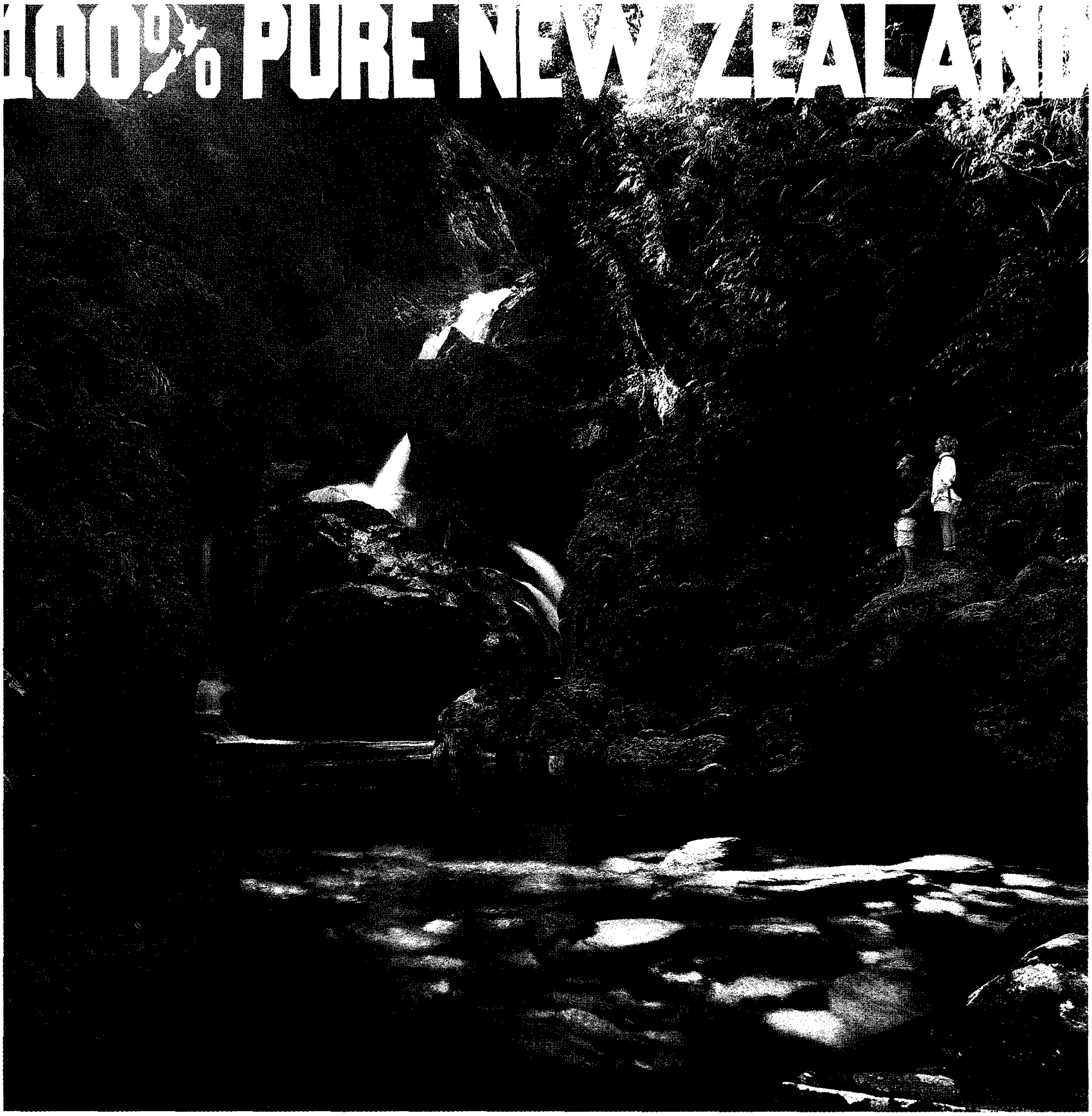
sacred rites of passage

Egypt, of course, is world famous for ancient sites such as the pyramids outside Cairo and at Luxor—and visits to such places are imperative cultural stops on any Egyptian tour. However, travellers in search of something novel are heading to the Mediterranean city of Alexandria, where an ancient library first conceived by Alexander the Great in 300 B.C. will be officially opened this spring. The Bibliotheca Alexandria (011-203-487-6052) is an award-winning architectural marvel constructed near the University of Alexandria campus. The circular, thirteen-story granite and glass structure, partly

> The Alexandria Project will serve as a center of culture.



The Bibliotheca Alexandria/courtesy of the Egyptian Tourist Authority



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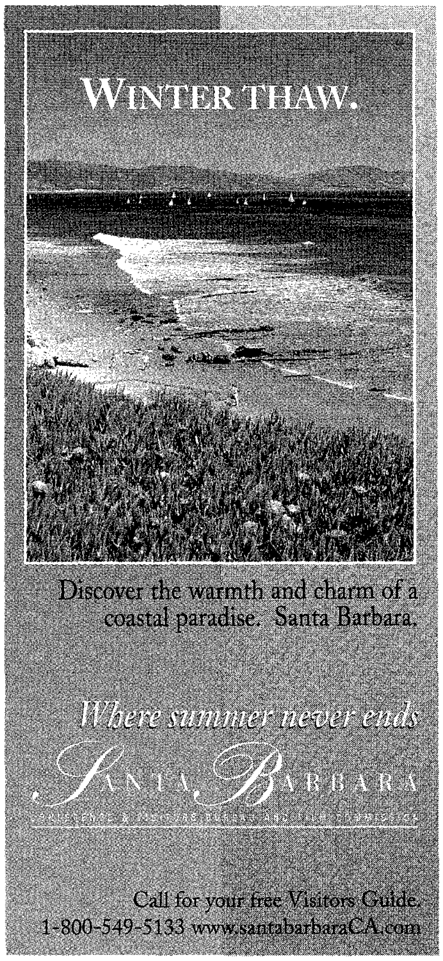
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submerged in a pool of water, graces the Mediterranean seacoast. It is one of the largest libraries in the world with a two-thousand-seat reading area, and will eventually hold eight million volumes. The Ancient Library of Alexandria Project will serve as a center of culture, science, and academic research.

Alexandria is a beautiful port city originally built by Greek architect Dinocrates. Later it acquired the Roman Amphitheatre and the Catacombs of Kom El Shokafa. Now galleries such as those in the Royal Jewelry Museum (011-203-582-8348) are part of its treasure. There are also cemeteries from World War II holding the remains of soldiers from Great Britain, Germany, and Italy.

out of boundaries

South Africa's cultural jewel is Cape Town, which has emerged as one of the most desirable cities in the world to live in or visit, with charming cafés, magnificent scenery, and fascinating history. The city is home to a plethora of museums and galleries, such as the South African National Gallery (011-27-21-465-1628) and the South African Cultural History Museum (011-27-21-461-8280), housed in a four-hundred-year-old former slave dwelling. The District Six Museum (011-27-21-461-4735) provides a forthright account of an episode from the apartheid years, describing what happened in 1966 when the government abruptly turned a multiethnic neighborhood into a for-whites-only subdivision. The prison where Nelson Mandela spent much of his life is just a short ferry ride from Cape Town to Robben Island (011-27-21-419-2875).

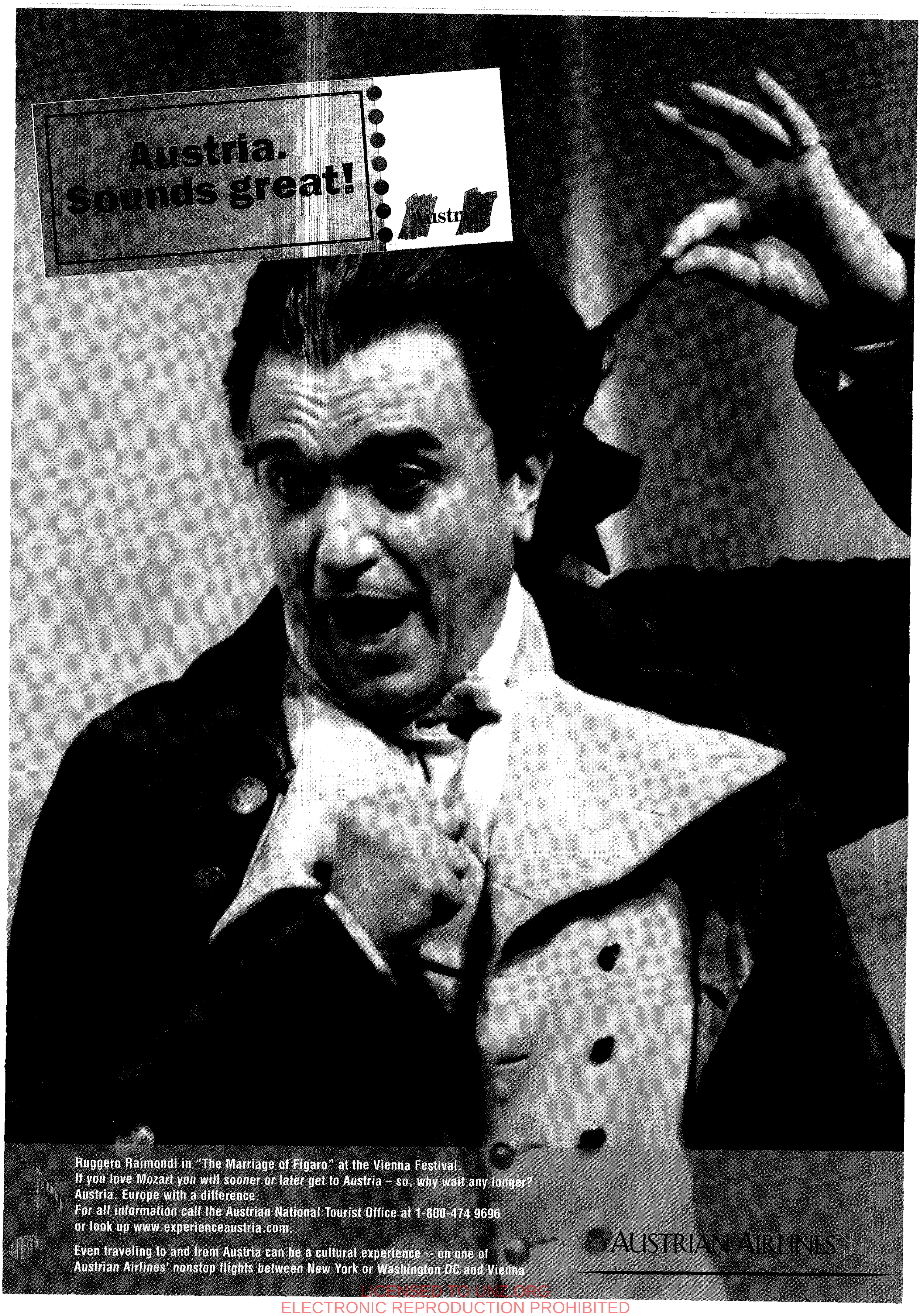
Adventurous travellers can also explore African townships like Guguletu and Langa just outside Cape Town, where they may encounter the Xhosa peoples. Or visitors may go even farther afield to the KwaZulu-Natal province in the eastern part of the country, largely inhabited by the Zulus. An authentic array of exotic arts and crafts can be found at local street bazaars.

Xhosa boy © Inge Yspeert/Corbis

cultural highs

Kathmandu, Nepal provides a central base for thousands of Himalayan mountain trekkers. As anyone who has read Jon Krakauer's "Into Thin Air" knows, mountaineering is the unique and fascinating pastime of staunch adventurers. It's also an expensive and grueling hobby. But anyone curious to know what it's like to visit a Mt. Everest base camp can do so without ever setting foot in Kathmandu.

Through November 4th, Austria is sponsoring a modern mountaineering exhibition, the "Call of the Mountains" (011-43-6452-20130) in Altenmarkt, about forty miles from Salzburg. The exhibit includes documentaries on mountaineering, a climbing wall, and even a Sherpa café where visitors can sample traditional Tibetan foods such as *momos* (dough pockets filled



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Vienna Opera Ball/courtesy of Austrian National Tourist Office

On the other side of the Austrian cultural spectrum, the Vienna Opera Ball (011-43-1-51444-2606, Ext. 2606), the biggest and most famous ball on the Viennese cultural dance card, will be held on February 22nd. More than two hundred young debutantes turn out in their finest formal clothes, shimmering and swirling for the pleasure of the onlookers. After a brief tour, the Vienna Philharmonic (011-43-1-505-6525) will return to the Musikverein concert hall on March 10th to perform Mozart, Strauss, and Schumann.

aweigh to go

While many cultural travellers desire an in-depth experience, others prefer to cut a broader swath. Taking a cruise and stopping at different ports of call is a good way to sample a number of different cultures in a single trip. And cruise ships themselves can be their own cultural experience.

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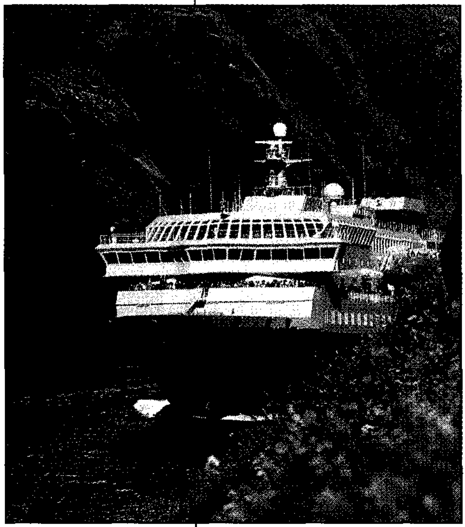

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TravLtips charts two new cruises of its own: a Nile River excursion with an Egyptologist aboard and a journey to the South Pacific's Marquesas Islands to explore Polynesian culture.

the aura of finland

From snowmobile and husky safaris to remote Lapland villages to hands-on training from the Sami in reindeer driving (participants are even awarded a reindeer driver's license), those who thirst for cultural participation will find plenty of opportunities in Finland.

For cultural observers on the other hand, Helsinki is a major attraction. The city, which celebrated its 450th anniversary last year, continues the festivities with a slew of events, exhibitions, and performances at its myriad museums, concert halls, and theatres. The country also packs a large number of festivals into its short summers. The Kuhmo Chamber Music Festival (011-358-8-6520936), considered to be one of the finest in the world, runs from July 15th to 29th and features music from the eighteenth century to the present day. From August 22nd to October 7th, the Amos Anderson Art Museum (011-358-9-684-4460) will feature "Marimekko at 50." The exhibit will showcase the ceramic and textile art of Fujiwo Ishimoto, one of Marimekko's leading designers.

homegrown

Of course, it's not necessary to go abroad to be a cultural traveller. Take New York, where the whole Gotham experience is practically within walking distance of a well-situated hotel like the Park

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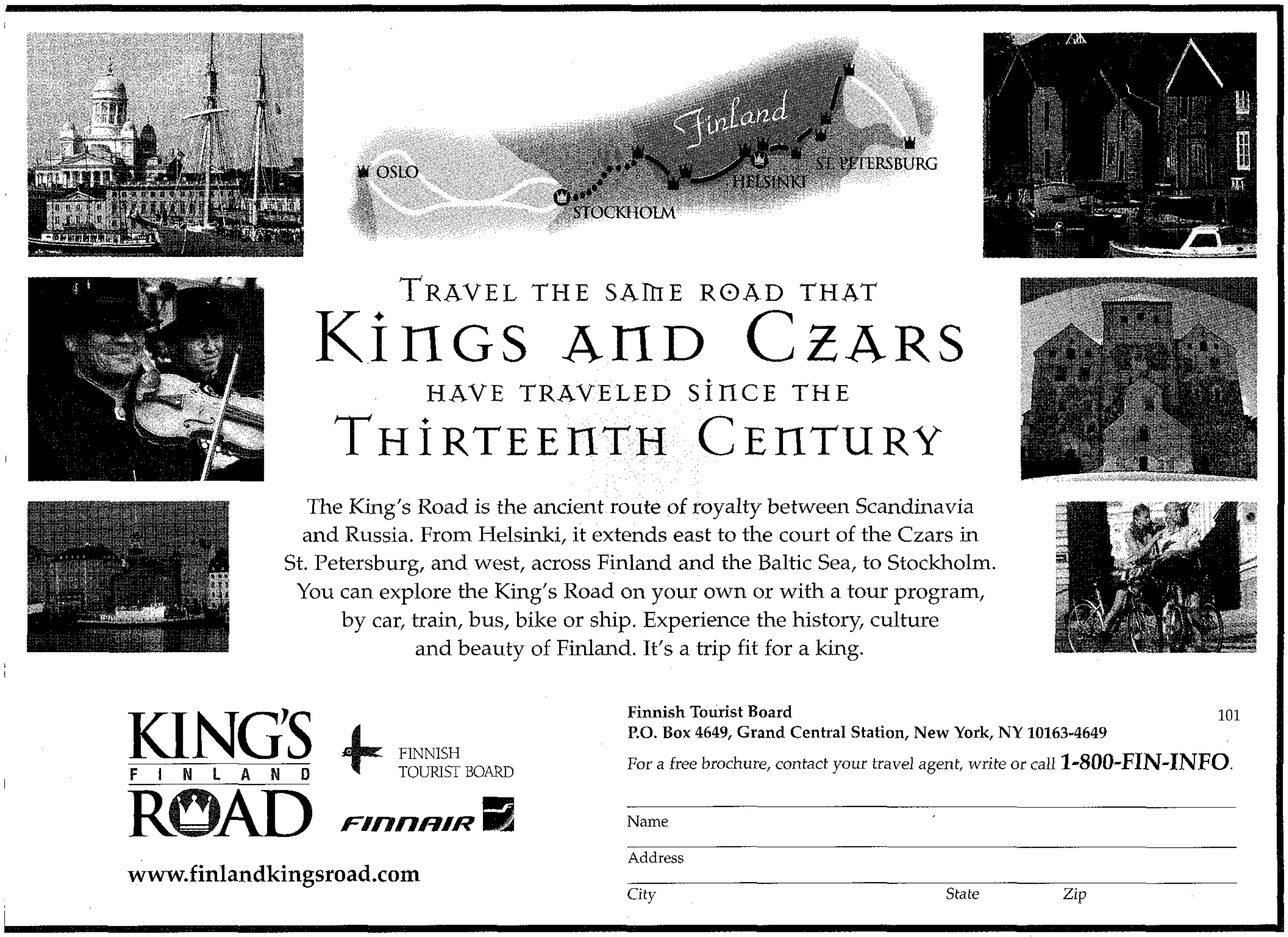

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Central on Seventh Avenue across from Carnegie Hall. In April, opera diva Kathleen Battle will perform at the landmark concert hall. In November, the city awarded a waterfront site in Lower Manhattan to the Guggenheim Museum for a new exhibition space that will open in five or six years. In the meantime, the existing Guggenheim Museum on Fifth Avenue (212-423-3500) will host an exhibit on the Baroque and Modern periods of Brazilian art and culture called "Body and Soul" later this year.

Ironically, New York's Museum of Modern Art (212-708-9400) opened an exhibition last week called "Workspheres" that focuses on the reasons we take vacations in the first place—our work lives. The exhibition brings to life realistic visions of the near future, and ranges from entire working environments to computer interfaces. Through May 15th, MOMA is also the place to check out another unusual exhibit. "Van Gogh's Postman: The Portraits of Joseph Roulin" is an eccentric collection comprised of seven paintings and drawings by Vincent van Gogh made between 1888-89 that depict his mailman, who was one of the artist's best friends.

Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum © G.E. Kidder Smith/Corbis

New York's premier cultural experience is its nightlife. Every Thursday, Downtown's cabaret-style Fez (212-533-7000), for example, presents the fourteen-piece Mingus Big Band, assembled by Charles Mingus's widow Sue Mingus, and highlights the bassist's vast repertoire.

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(Geoff Yennie is a travel writer and adventurer based in San Diego.)

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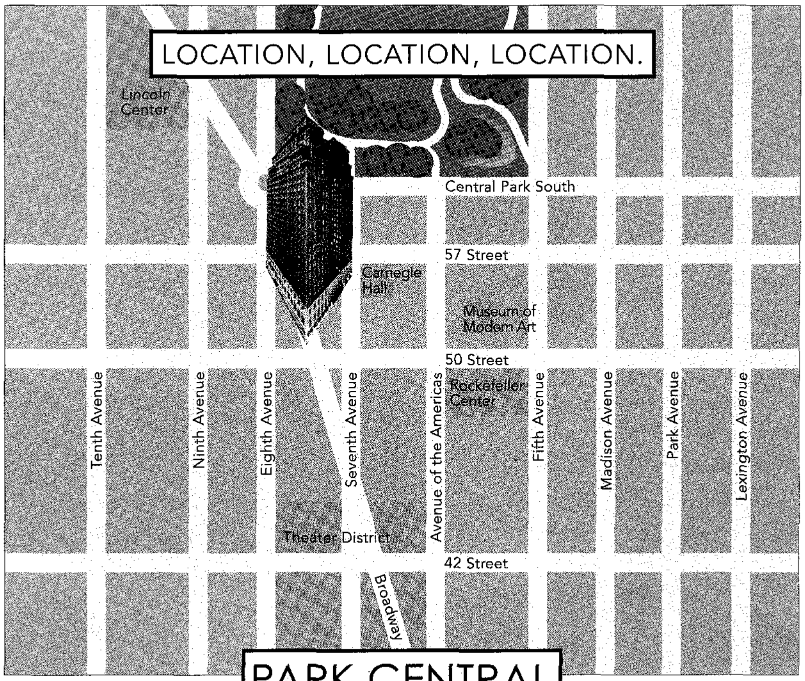
news briefs

At the epicenter of popular culture is a new arts district in Miami Beach called **Collins Park Cultural Center**. It includes the Bass Museum of Art and the Miami City Ballet. There are scores of beachfront cafés and hotels in the area. • After a hard day on the Miami cultural scene, those in search of a respite may want to exit stage right. A short drive across the Rickenbacker Causeway Bridge is the new **Ritz-Carlton, Key Biscayne**, opening next month. The 352-room tennis resort hotel is close enough to be an easy commute to the action, but far enough away to offer a relaxing alternative to the urban experience. Case in point: A twenty-thousand-square-foot world-class spa. • The ancient Mongolian proverb, "It is far better to see it once than to hear of it a thousand times," sums up the philosophy of **Nomadic Expeditions**, which offers the excursion "Classic Mongolian Odyssey: The Naadam Festival" from July 5–16, and designs a variety of other customized adventures for cultural and educational organizations. • **Caravella Italia**, which crafts tours for small groups throughout Italy, launches its two-week Jewish Heritage Tour to seven Italian cities on October 16th. Itinerary highlights include synagogue and museum visits in Rome and Venice with opportunities to meet esteemed members of these Jewish communities. • If you have to miss this year's Fat Tuesday festivities, it's Carnival year-round at **Bolongo Bay Beach Club & Villas** in St. Thomas, where *mocko-jumbie* stilt dancers perform every week to a steel band at a buffet of West Indian delicacies. • While Hollywood replaced **Santa Barbara** as the motion picture capital in the early nineteen-hundreds, the picturesque coastal city celebrates the medium at its annual Santa Barbara International Film Festival, March 1–11. • Travellers seeking off-the-beaten-path European experiences can ring up **Europe by Car**, which leases vehicles for touring the wine country in France and Italy, where remote wineries are accessible only by car. • Specializing in environmentally aware travel in Latin America, **G.A.P Adventures** introduces a no-frills



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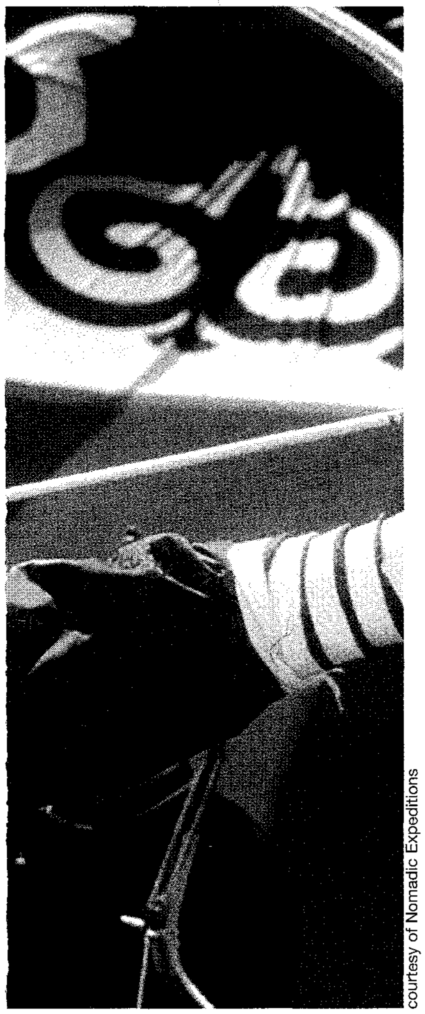
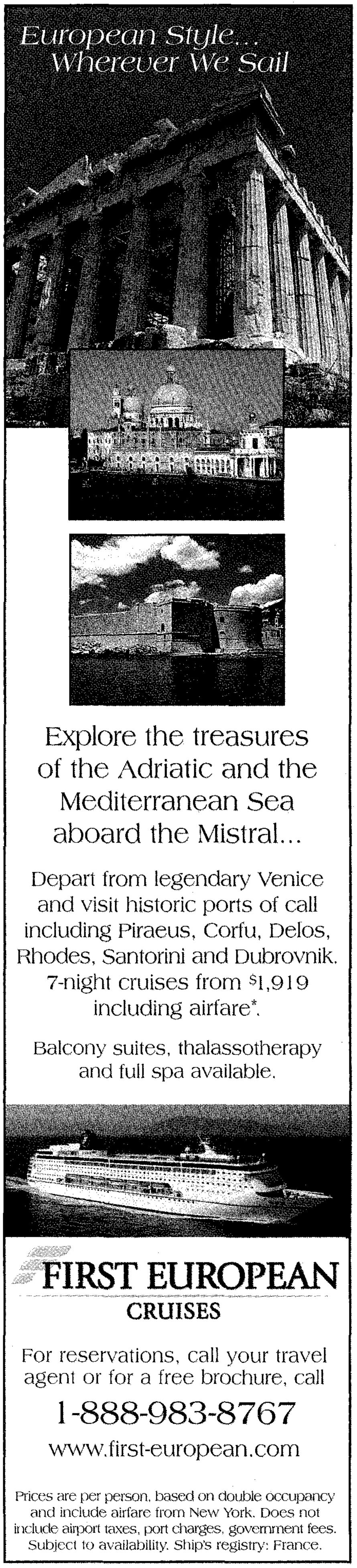

courtesy of Nomadic Expeditions

through early spring, the aurora borealis. Now's the best time to book its unique, small-group excursions to view polar bears in late summer and fall. • Summer is festival season, and one of the world's finest is the **White Nights Festival** in St. Petersburg, Russia (June 1–July 1), an array of ballet, opera, and symphonic performances under the artistic leadership of Valery Gergiev. • A specialty of **Fort Recovery Estate Villas** in Tortola is sunset weddings on its sandy beachfront. Reception entertainment? Choose from steel pan bands, a reggae d.j., or a calypso group. • **Tuscany Now** books private villa rentals throughout Italy and provides links to a range of activities such as yacht charters, tours to wine cellars in medieval villages, art exhibitions in Venice, and operatic performances at hilltop venues. Updated news flashes on its Web site alert browsers to upcoming events. • If a walking adventure in Tuscany is to your liking, **Whole Journeys** is booking June and September trips that visit pre-Roman Etruscan ruins and include wine tasting and food sampling. • Best to book early for **Elite International's** custom-designed guided tours to Japan, where clients have a rare opportunity to view the hidden, intimate side of Japanese culture. • **I. C. C. E.** (International Council for Cultural Exchange) offers eight distinctive culture-specific European trips from March through September that focus on opera, performing arts, music, and painting. Its two new destinations are Paris/Riviera and Northern Europe (Oslo, Stockholm, and St. Petersburg). • Active-travel specialist **Backroads** maps a six-day cooking and walking trip to sun-drenched Provence. Visit outdoor markets and ancient Roman architectural sites, and get schooled in Provençal cuisine with noted chefs Lydie Marshall and Philippe Monti. • **Stay & Visit Italy** rewards travellers booking early-spring tours (dates in late March and April) with a bonus: three free nights at a four-star hotel in Rome. • Why make a beeline to London in late spring? For starters: the Chelsea Flower Show in May and the Wimbledon grand slam tennis fortnightly from June to early July. **As You Like It** accommodates temporary residents with a full selection of London flat rentals.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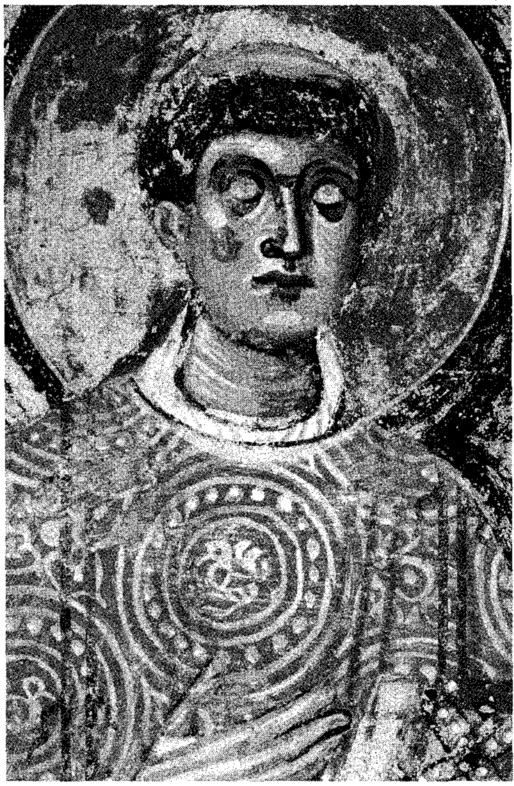
feasting the senses

A little-known bonus for Riviera vacationers lies just fifteen kilometers west of Nice, in the hillside town of Villeneuve-Loubet. The modest Midi house in which master chef Auguste Escoffier was born is now home to the Museum of Culinary Art. His patron saint, Fortunatus, smiles impishly down from a niche in the courtyard, rolling pin in hand, and sets the tone for the pleasures that await within.

Anyone who has ever enjoyed a good meal will revel in the culinary artifacts and memorabilia on view from cellar to attic. The reconstructed nineteenth-century Provençal kitchen contains a rare assortment of burnished copper pots, pans, and utensils. Escoffier's beautifully preserved notebooks record culinary esoteria for posterity, such as his secret for determining the freshness of truffles. A collection of centuries-old newspaper and magazine cartoons satirize the universal foibles of chefs, gourmets, gourmands, and gluttons. A visit to this unique museum definitively demonstrates that the creativity involved in the preparation of edibles is as much a mark of civilization as are art and literature.

Sylvia Leff
Walnut Creek, CA



St. Fortunatus © Elio Ciol/Corbis

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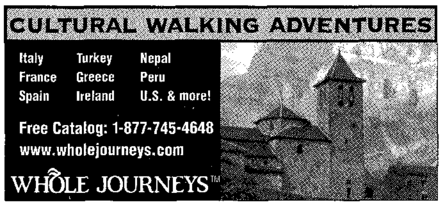

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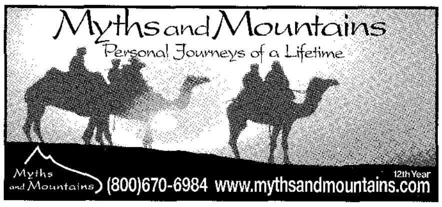

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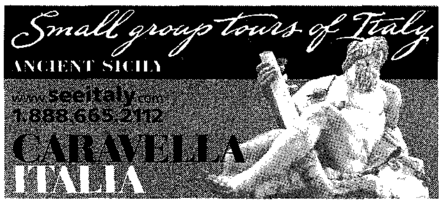

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horns aplenty

Having a focus while museum hopping makes for a richer experience. Last year I visited twelve important museums in six European countries in order to do research on the prehistoric Celts. Despite their diverse locations, the museums displayed similar Celtic jewelry, home furnishings, and war implements. I discovered that Celtic peoples throughout Europe employed the same spiral designs and depicted the same fantastic animals. Even their hairstyles were the same.

But the continuity of the Celtic heritage really sunk in when I visited a museum in Edinburgh and noticed sketches on metal of men blowing huge curved horns about four feet long. I had already seen originals of these immense horns in the Danish National Museum. Made of iron, they must be as heavy as tubas. The Danes find these horns fascinating too, and on the Rådhuspladsen (Town Hall Square) in front of the Palace Hotel, they have erected a statue of a Viking blowing such a horn. A popular Danish saying holds that the Viking blows his horn each time a virgin walks across the Square, and that's the reason why no one has ever heard it blow.

Dorothy Jane Mills
Naples, FL

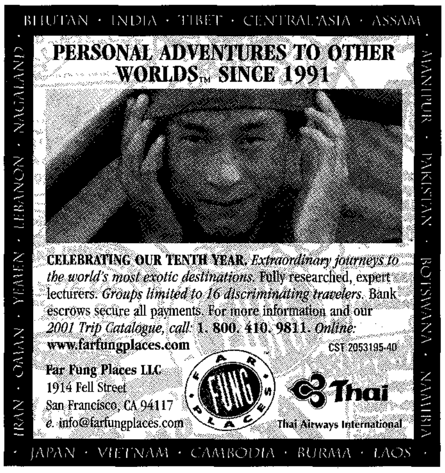
shadow play

In Bali, with the arrival of nightfall, great tongues of shadow lick across the land, and behind every coral wall lurk the formless, shadowy demons that are ever a part of the Balinese night.

Our lives were absorbed with a particular manifestation of Balinese culture, the outdoor dance performance, this time at the Ubud Arts Center. The program was a series of dances on a stage lit by torches and candles, with a temple gate for a backdrop and the moon and stars shining down on performers and spectators alike. After the ringing of the gamelan, we witnessed a welcome dance of profound grace and absorbing narrative. Amid flashing lights and glittering colors, the golden performers spoke with their movements directly to our hearts. They seemed to have come from a higher, more perfect world of which we were afforded only a glimpse.

By tradition, Legong (Palace Dance) performers must be at the age of puberty. So for the Legong, three young girls appeared on stage, their smiling white faces crowned with jewel-encrusted headdresses. As brass notes shimmered, falling on us in waterfall sprays of rainbow sound, the torches flickered in the breeze and the spectacle grew ever more hallucinogenic. Eyes with the blackest of pupils shifted back and forth with amazing speed and precision. Energy seemed to flow like laser beams up the three slim bodies tightly wrapped in gold-embroidered sarongs. It snaked through slender, moving arms to pour from impossibly long, curvilinear fingers. Gold, light, sound, fingers, and eyes seemed to take up the whole stage, swirling around the three dancing forms until we ourselves were swept into the vortex. It was a Balinese world I'd never experienced before.

Anthony Gardner
San Francisco, CA



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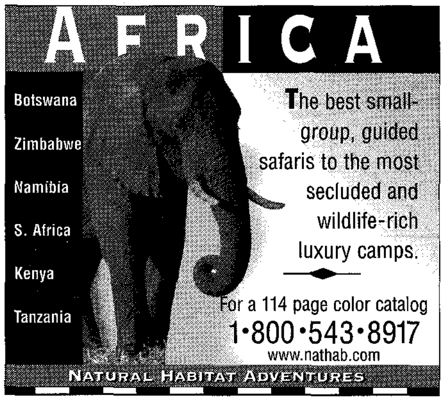

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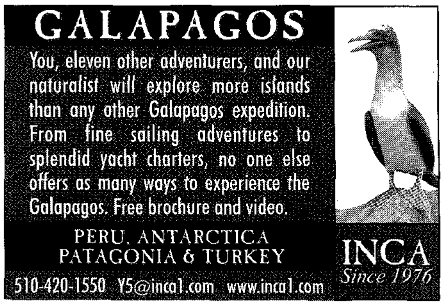

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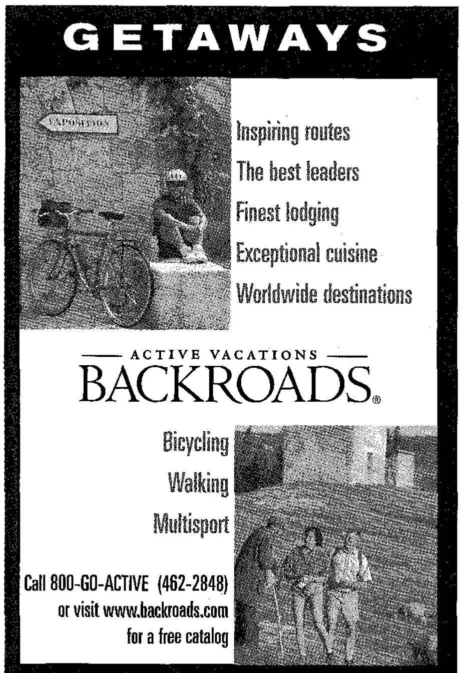
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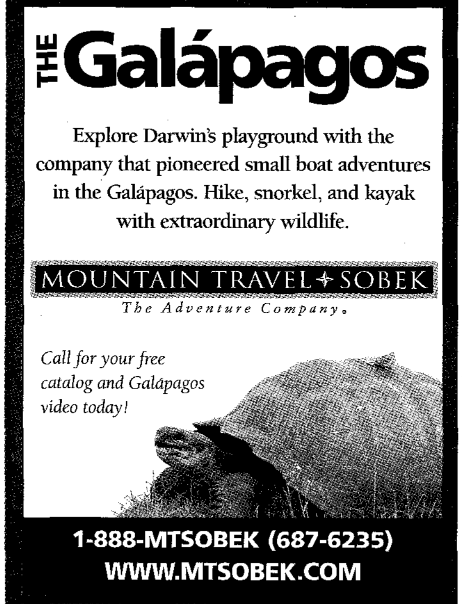
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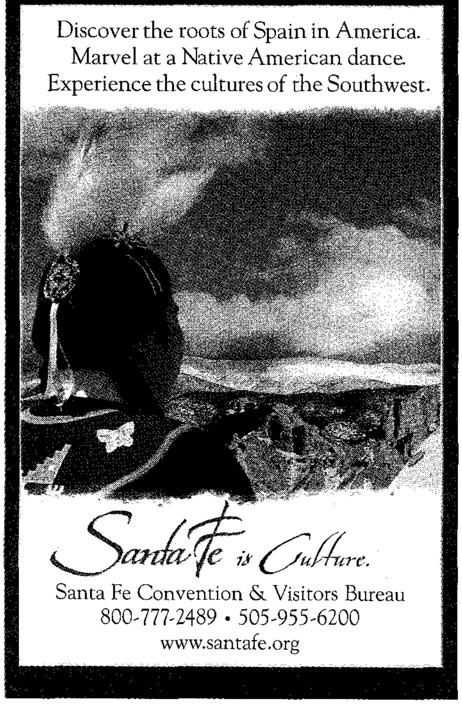
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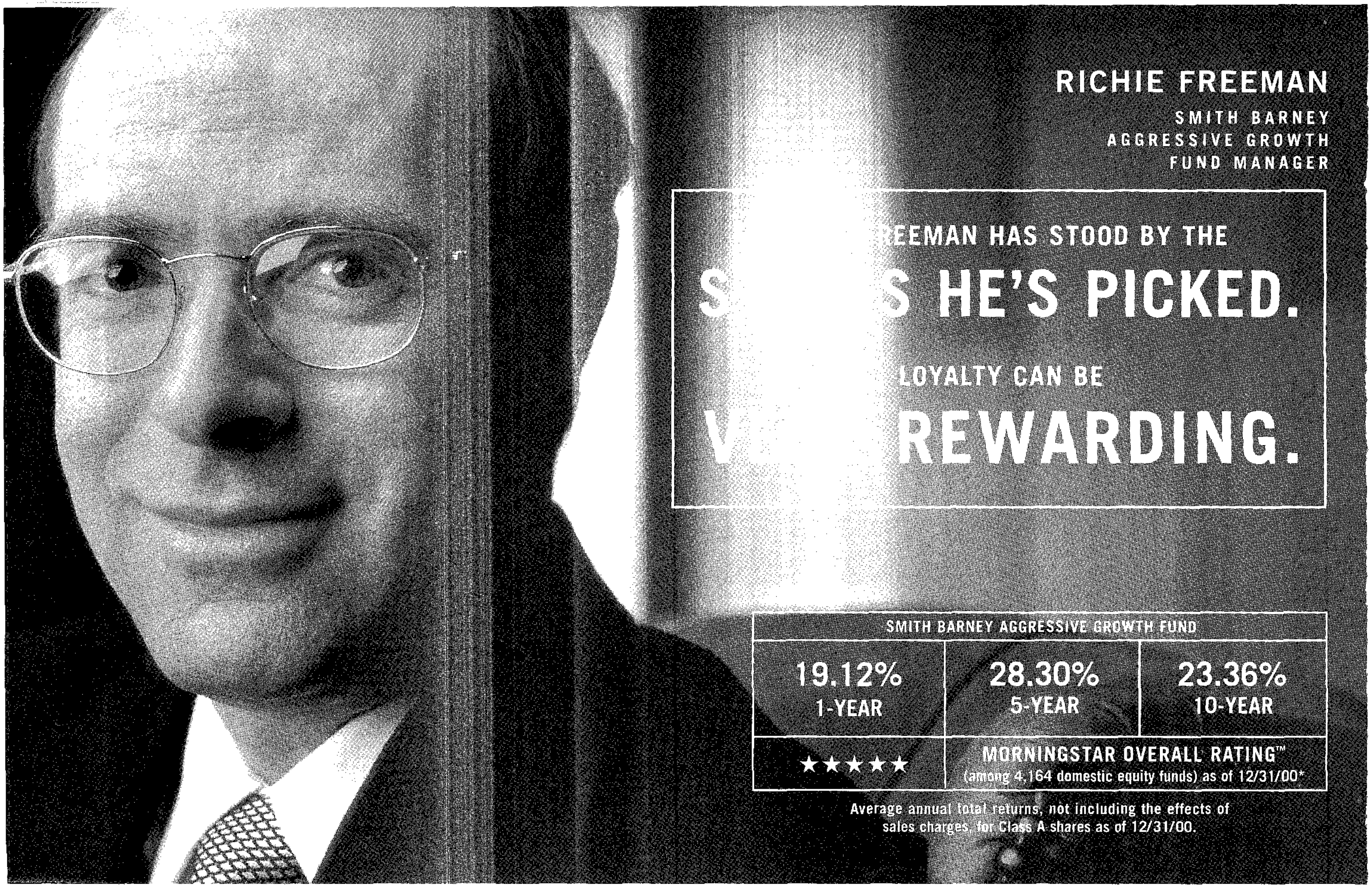

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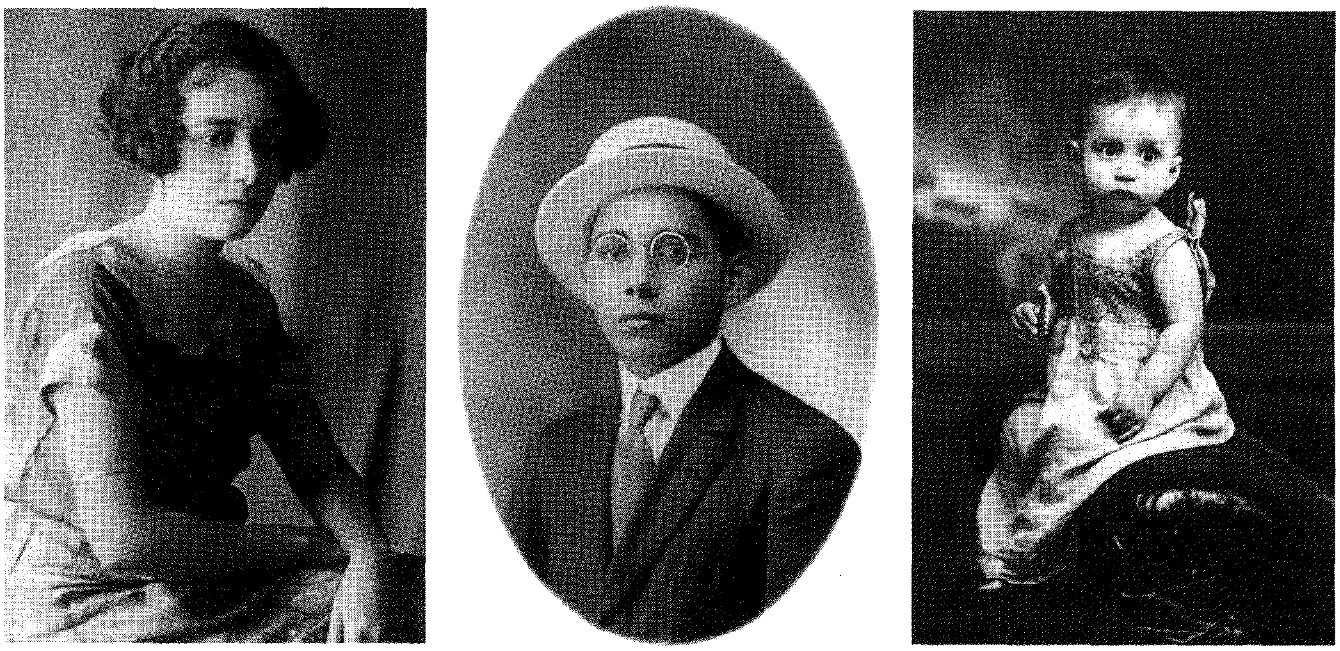
PERSONAL HISTORY

SERENADE

How my father won my mother.

BY GABRIEL GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ

My mother became a woman in a godforsaken hellhole. She had spent an uncertain childhood plagued by malarial fevers, but, once cured, she was cured completely and forever, and with her health as strong as reinforced concrete she was able to celebrate her ninety-fifth birthday with eleven of her own children, and four of her husband's, and sixty-six grandchildren, seventy-three great-grandchildren, and five great-great-grandchildren. Not counting the ones nobody ever knew about.



Luisa Santiaga met her husband in Aracataca, where her family moved after a man was killed in a duel. Gabito was born there.

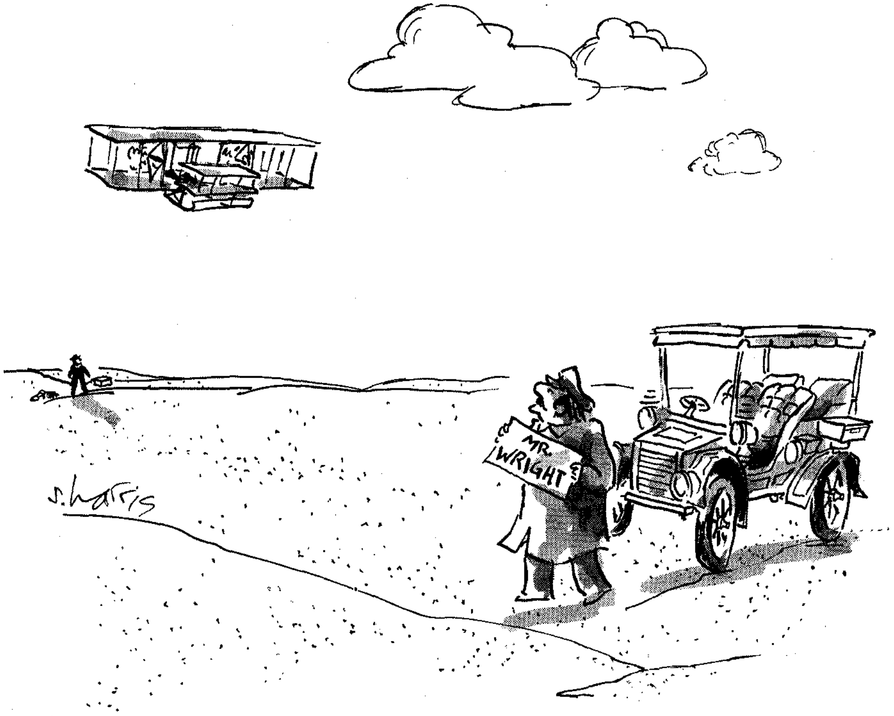
CAMBIO, COLOMBIA

Her name was Luisa Santiaga, and she was the third daughter of Colonel Nicolás Márquez Mejía and his wife (and first cousin) Tranquilina Iguarán Cotes, whom we called Mina. Luisa Santiaga was born in Barrancas, in Colombia, on the banks of the Ranchería River, on July 25, 1905, when the family was recovering from the disaster of the civil wars, and two years after the Colonel, her father, had killed Medardo Pacheco in a duel over a point of honor. Luisa, her first name, was in memory of her paternal grandmother, Luisa Mejía Vidal, who had died the month before her birth. Santiaga, her second name, was in honor of the apostle Santiago el Mayor, St. James the Greater, who was decapitated in Jerusalem. She kept the second name a secret, because it seemed masculine and ostentatious, until a faithless son revealed it in a novel.

Luisa Santiaga had the education typical of a well-bred Catholic girl, brought up by a family of happy sinners. Educated at the Colegio de la Presentación, in Santa Marta, she was a diligent student in all areas, except the music lessons imposed on her by a mother who couldn't conceive of a respectable señorita who was not an accomplished pianist. For three years, an obedient Luisa Santiaga attended her lessons, and then one day, overcome by the tedium of practicing every afternoon in the sultry heat of siesta time, she abandoned them. Nevertheless, the only virtue that would be of any use to her, in all of her twenty years, was the strength of her character when her family discovered she was madly in love with a young, proud telegraph operator from Aracataca. Her family had moved to Aracataca after the killing of Medardo Pacheco.

The history of their forbidden love was one of the wonders of my youth. Having heard that history told so many times by my parents—sometimes by both of them together, sometimes by each one alone—it was almost intact in my mind when, at the age of twenty-three, I wrote my first novel, "Leaf Storm," though I knew I still had much to learn about the art of writing novels. They were both excellent storytellers, happy in their recollections of their love, but they were also so impassioned in their accounts that when I was past fifty and had decided at last to use their story in "Love in the Time of Cholera," I couldn't distinguish between life and poetry.

According to my mother's version, the two of them met at a wake for a child. She was singing in the courtyard with her friends, following the popular custom of singing love songs to pass the time through the nine nights of mourning for innocents. Out of nowhere, a man's voice joined the choir. All the girls turned to look at the man who was singing and were stunned by his good looks. "He is



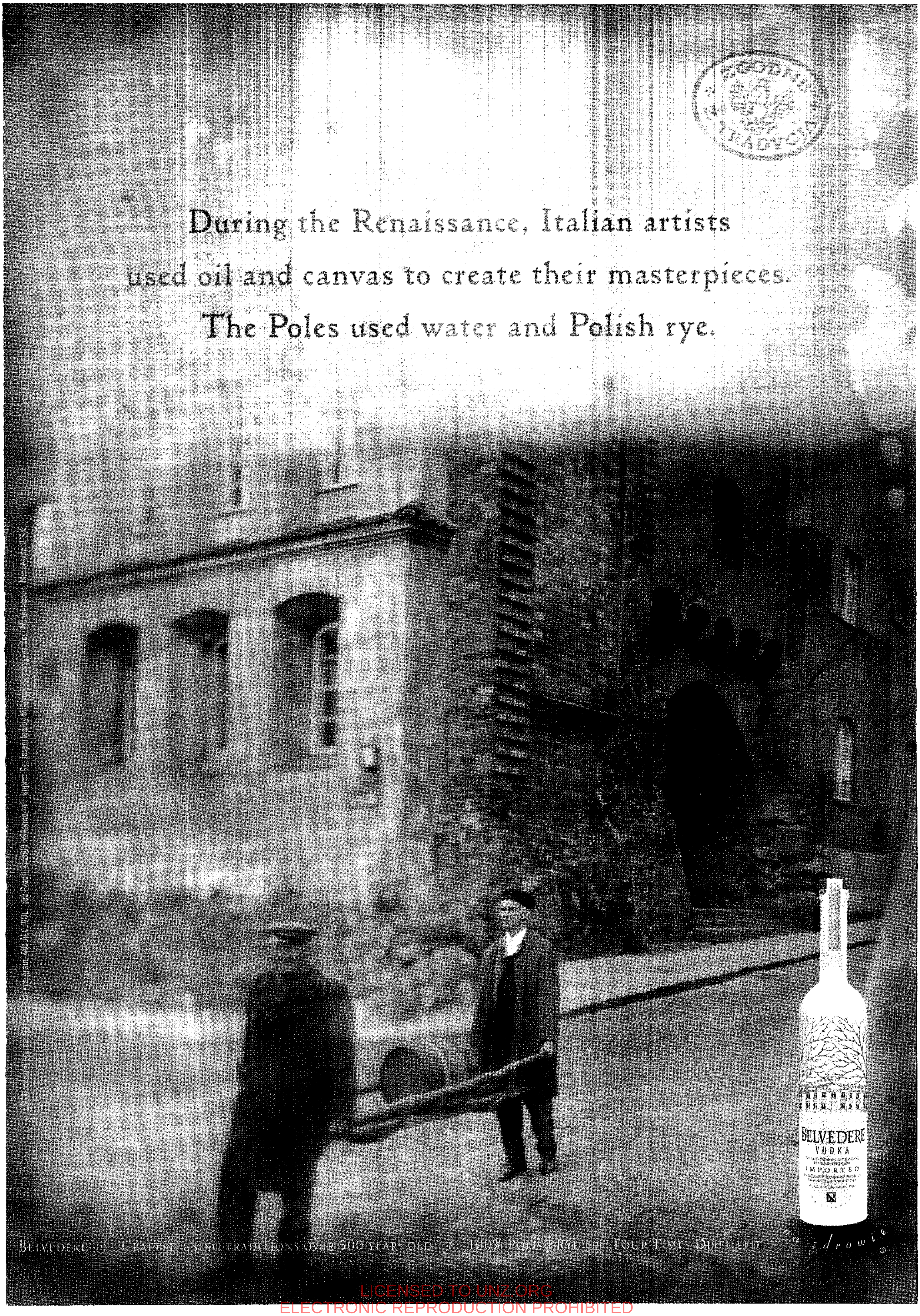
the one we're going to marry," they chanted, and clapped their hands in unison. He did not, however, impress my mother. "He was," she said, "just another stranger." And he was. His name was Gabriel Eligio García, and after having abandoned his medical and pharmaceutical studies in Cartagena de Indias, owing to a lack of funds, he'd found work in some of the nearby towns in the more mundane profession of telegraph operator. A photograph from that time shows him distinguished by the equivocal bearing of impoverished gentility. He wore a suit of dark taffeta, with a four-button jacket, very close-fitting, in the style of the day, and a high, stiff collar, wide tie, and flat-brimmed straw hat. He also wore fashionable round spectacles with thin wire frames. He had a reputation as a hard-living, womanizing bohemian, but he never had a cigarette or a glass of alcohol in his long life.

Although it was the first time my mother saw him, he had seen her the previous Sunday at eight o'clock Mass, guarded by her Aunt Francisca Simodosea Mejía. He had seen them again the following Tuesday, sewing beneath the almond trees near the front door to the family house. By the night of the wake, he had learned she was the daughter of Colonel Nicolás Márquez, to whom he was already bearing letters of introduction. After that night, she learned he was a bachelor, with a facility for falling in love, whose immediate local success arose from an inexhaustible gift for conversation, an ease in writing verse, a grace on the dance floor, and a predisposition for playing the violin with a sentimental flair. My mother told me that when you heard his playing in the small hours of the morning you felt an irresistible urge to weep. His calling card was "After the Ball," a waltz of consummate romanticism that was an invariable feature of his serenades. These heartwarming talents, and his powerful charm, opened the doors of the Colonel's house and earned Gabriel Eligio a regular place at family lunches. Aunt Francisca adopted him without reservation when she learned that he had been born in Sincé, a town near her birthplace. At these gatherings, he entertained my mother with his proficiency in the arts of seduction, but it never occurred to her that such displays had any significance. On the contrary, their friendly relations were understood to be a pretense, meant to hide the secret love between him and a classmate of hers, and my mother even agreed to act as a godparent at their future wedding. (He took to calling her "godmother" and she called him "godson.") It is easy, then, to imagine the extent of Luisa Santiaga's surprise when, one night at a dance, the bold telegraph operator took the flower from his buttonhole and handed it to her, saying, "I give you my life in this rose."

There was, he told me many times, nothing spontaneous about the gesture; by then, after meeting many girls, he'd reached the conclusion that Luisa Santiaga was the one for him. She interpreted the rose as nothing more than one of the playful gallantries he used with her friends. In fact, at the end of the dance that evening she left the flower behind. And yet, while she'd had one secret suitor, a good friend and luckless poet whose ardent verses never succeeded in touching her heart, this rose disturbed her sleep and filled her with an inexplicable fury. In our first formal conversation about their love, when she already had a good number of children, she confessed, "I couldn't sleep because I was angry thinking about him, but the fact that I was thinking about him made me even angrier, and the angrier I became the more I thought about him." For the rest of the week it was all she could do to endure the terror that she might see him and the torment that she might not. One afternoon, Aunt Francisca teased her with mischievous guile, as the two of them were sewing beneath the almond trees. "They say somebody gave you a rose."

Luisa Santiaga was the last to know that the torments of her heart were already common knowledge.

In the numerous conversations I had with her and my father, together and separately, they agreed that their fulminating love had three decisive moments. The first was on a Palm Sunday during High Mass. Luisa Santiaga was sitting with Aunt Francisca on a bench on the side of the Epistolary, when she recognized the sound of my father's flamenco heels clicking on the tiles of the floor, and he then passed so close to her that she felt the warm gust of a sentimental cologne. Aunt Francisca appeared not to have seen him, and he appeared not to have seen them. But the truth was that it had been premeditated, and he had been following them since they walked past the telegraph office. He stood beside the column closest to the door, so that he could see Luisa Santiaga from the back but she couldn't see him. After a few intense minutes, she could not bear the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suspense and looked over her shoulder. Then she thought she would die of rage: there he was, looking at her, and their eyes met. "It was exactly what I had planned," my father would say with pleasure when he repeated the story to me in his old age. My mother, on the other hand, never tired of saying that for three days she could not control her fury at falling into the trap.

The second moment was a letter he wrote to her. It was not the kind of letter she might have expected from a poet who played furtive serenades on his violin at dawn, but an imperious note demanding a reply before he travelled to Santa Marta the following week. She didn't answer it. She locked herself in her room, determined to kill this worm of love that was not leaving her enough air to breathe, until Aunt Francisca tried to convince her to give in before it was too late. Aunt Francisca told her the exemplary tale of Juventino Trillo, a suitor who stood guard every night, from seven o'clock until ten, under the balcony of his beloved, while every night she appeared above, hurling at him every insult she could think of, including a chamberpot of urine, which, night after night, she emptied upon his head; Juventino would not be driven away, and after countless baptismal assaults she was moved by his self-sacrifice and invincible love and married him. The story of my parents did not reach those extremes.

The third moment was a grand wedding to which the two of them had been invited as patrons of honor. Luisa Santiaga could make no excuses—the event was too important to her family. Gabriel Eligio had understood this and attended the celebration in the belief that anything could happen. When Luisa Santiaga saw him crossing the room with the obvious intention of asking her to dance the first dance, she could not control her heart. "It was pounding so hard in my body that I couldn't tell if it was from anger or fear," she told me. He realized this and delivered a heavy-handed blow: "You don't have to say yes, because your heart is saying it for you." Without a word, she turned and left him standing in the middle of the dance floor. My father understood this in his own way. "It made me happy," he told me. When Luisa Santiaga was wakened before dawn by the strains of "After the Ball," Gabriel Eligio's poisonous flattering waltz, she could not contain her rage. The first thing she did that morning was return all his gifts. This rejection, and the talk of her walking away from him at the wedding, was like so many feathers tossed into the air and lost forever; people assumed they had witnessed the inglorious end of a summer storm. The impression was strengthened when Luisa Santiaga suffered a recurrence of the malarial fevers of her childhood, and her mother took her away to recuperate in Manaure, an Edenic spot on the other side of the Sierra Nevada.

My mother and father both denied having any communication during those months, but this didn't seem credible, for when my mother returned, recovered from her ailments, she and my father also seemed to have recovered from their earlier apprehensions. My father said he went to meet her at the station because he had read the telegram in which Mina announced their return, and when Luisa Santiaga greeted him, by pressing his hand, he understood it to be something like a Masonic sign of love. She always denied this with the same blushing modesty she brought to her evocations of those years. But the truth is that from then on they were less reserved when seen together. All that was missing was an ending, which Aunt Francisca provided the following week, while sewing among the begonia bushes: "Your mother knows everything!"

Luisa Santiaga always said it was her family's opposition that made her leap across the dikes of the torrent that had run, in secret, through her heart since the night she left her suitor standing in the middle of the dance floor. It was a bitterly fought war. The Colonel tried to appear neutral, but he wasn't, as his wife, Mina, well knew. Everyone else thought that the opposition came from her, not him, when in reality it was inscribed in the tribal code that considers every suitor an interloper. This atavistic prejudice, whose embers still linger, has turned us into a vast family of men with their flies open and unmarried women with numerous children in the street.

Their friends were divided, for or against the lovers, according to age, and those who didn't have a settled position had one imposed by events. The young people became their enthusiastic accomplices—his above all, for he relished the position of being a sacrificial victim of social prejudices. Most of the adults, however, viewed Luisa Santiaga as the precious jewel of a rich and powerful family who was being courted by a parvenu telegraph operator, not for love but out of self-interest. And she, who had been obedient and submissive, confronted her opponents with the ferocity of a lioness who has just given birth. In the most corrosive of their many domestic disputes, Mina lost her temper and threatened her daughter with the bread knife. An impassive Luisa Santiaga stood her ground. Suddenly aware of the criminal implications of her wrath, Mina dropped the knife and screamed in horror, "Oh, my God!" And placed her hand on the hot coals of the stove in brutal repentance.

Among the powerful arguments against Gabriel Eligio was his status as the love child of an unmarried woman, who had given birth to him at the tender age of fourteen, after a casual misstep with a schoolteacher. Her name was Argemira García Paternina; she was a slender white girl with a joyous nature and a free spirit, who went on to have six more children, by three different fathers. She lived without a steady man in the town of Sincé, where she had been born, and used her wits to eke out a living for her offspring. Gabriel Eligio was a distinguished representative of that ragged breed. Since the age of sixteen he'd had five virgin lovers, as he revealed to my mother in an act of penitence on their wedding night, en route by river to Riohacha, aboard a hazardous schooner lashed by a squall. He confessed that with one of them, when he was eighteen and the telegraph operator in Achí, he'd had a son, Abelardo, who was almost three. With another, when he was twenty and the telegraph operator in Ayapel, he had a daughter, a few months old, whom he had never seen, named Carmen Rosa. He had promised the girl's mother that he would come back and marry her, and he had been intending to fulfill the commitment when his life changed course because of his love for Luisa Santiaga. He had acknowledged his son before a notary, and later he would do the same with his daughter, but these were no more than byzantine formalities without legal consequences. It is surprising that Colonel Márquez was so disquieted by

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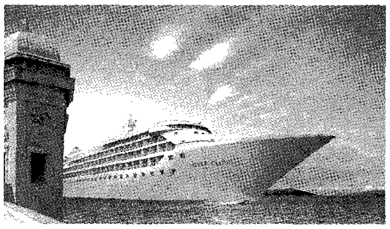

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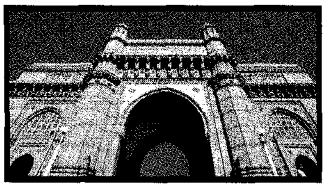

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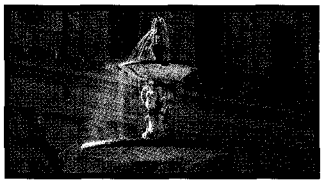

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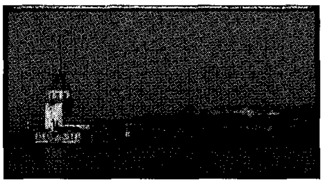

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this irregular conduct, when the Colonel himself had fathered, in addition to his three official children, nine more by different mothers, both before and after his marriage, and all of them were welcomed by his wife as if they were her own. It isn't possible for me to establish when I first heard these facts, but in any case the transgressions of my forebears didn't interest me in the slightest.

The family's opposition to Gabriel Eligio was even more ferocious because he was an active Conservative, a member of the party against which Colonel Nicolás Márquez had fought his wars. The peace declared by the Neerlandia and Wisconsin agreements was a tenuous one, and the government was still run by stony centralists; a good deal of time would pass before the Goths and the Liberals stopped baring their teeth at one another. Perhaps Gabriel Eligio's conservatism resulted more from familial contagion than from ideological conviction, but for my mother's family it outweighed the other attributes of his good character, such as his lively intelligence and shoemaker's integrity.

For his whole life my father was much poorer than he seemed, and he always considered poverty the hateful enemy he could never accept and would never defeat. He endured the impediments to his love for Luisa Santiaga with the same courage and dignity, in the back room of the telegraph office in Aracataca, where he always kept a hammock for sleeping alone. Yet, beside it, he also had a bachelor's cot with well-oiled springs, for whatever else the night might offer him. At one time I felt tempted by his furtive hunter's ways, but life taught me that there is no more arid form of solitude, and I felt great compassion for him.

Until a few years before his death, he would tell a story of one of those difficult days, an occasion when he had gone with some friends to the Colonel's house, and all were invited to sit down except him. My mother's family denied the story and attributed it to my father's still-burning resentment, or at least to a false memory, but once, when my grandmother was almost a hundred years old, and dramatically evoking a time that she wasn't so much remembering as reliving, she let it slip. "There's that poor man standing in the doorway of the living room, and Nicolasito hasn't asked him to sit down," she said with true regret. Always attentive to her dazzling revelations, I asked her who the man was, and her simple reply was "García, the one with the violin."

Amid so many absurdities, the most uncharacteristic was the revolver that my father bought to protect himself against what might happen when dealing with a retired warrior like Colonel Márquez. It was a venerable long-barrelled Smith & Wesson .38. Who knows how many previous owners it had and how many deaths it had caused? The only certainty is that he never fired it, not even as a warning or out of curiosity. Years later, his oldest children found it with its original five bullets, along with the violin of his serenades, in a cupboard full of useless trash.

Gabriel Eligio and Luisa Santiaga were not intimidated by the harshness of her family. At first they met on the sly, in the houses of friends, but after the circle closed completely around her their only communication was by letters sent through ingenious channels. When she was not permitted to attend parties where he might be a guest, they saw each other at a distance. But the repression became so severe that no one dared defy her mother's wrath, and the lovers disappeared from public view. When not even a crack was left open for furtive letters, they invented the stratagems of the shipwrecked. She managed to hide a greeting card in a dessert that someone had ordered for Gabriel Eligio's birthday, and he sent her false and innocuous telegrams with the real message in code or written in sympathetic ink; Aunt Francisca's complicity then became so evident, despite her categorical denials, that for the first time her authority in the house was affected, and she was allowed to accompany her niece only when they were sewing in the shade of the almond trees. Then Gabriel Eligio sent messages of love from the window of Dr. Antonio Barboza, whose house was across the way, using the manual telegraphy of deaf-mutes. Luisa Santiaga learned it so well that when her aunt's attention wandered she held intimate conversations with her sweetheart. It was only one of the countless tricks devised by Adriana Berdugo, Dr. Barboza's wife, a *comadre* of Luisa Santiaga's and her most inventive and daring accomplice.

These consoling devices would have been enough for the two of them to survive a slow fire, but then Gabriel Eligio

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received an alarming letter from Luisa Santiaga, which compelled him to start thinking in a strategic way. She had written in haste, on toilet paper, giving him the bad news that her parents had decided to take her away, back to Barrancas, stopping in each town along the way, as a cure for her lovesickness. It would not be the ordinary journey of one bad night, on the schooner to Riohacha; instead, they would follow the barbaric route along the peaks of the Sierra Nevada, on the backs of mules and in carts, through the vast region of Padilla.

"I would rather have died," my mother told me many years later. And she had in fact tried to die, locking her bedroom door and eating nothing but bread and water for three days, until she was overwhelmed by the reverential terror she felt for the Colonel. Gabriel Eligio realized the situation could go no further, and he made a decision that was just as extreme, although more manageable. He strode from Dr. Barboza's house, crossed the street to the shade of the almond trees, and stopped in front of the two frightened women, my mother and Aunt Francisca, who held their work in their laps.

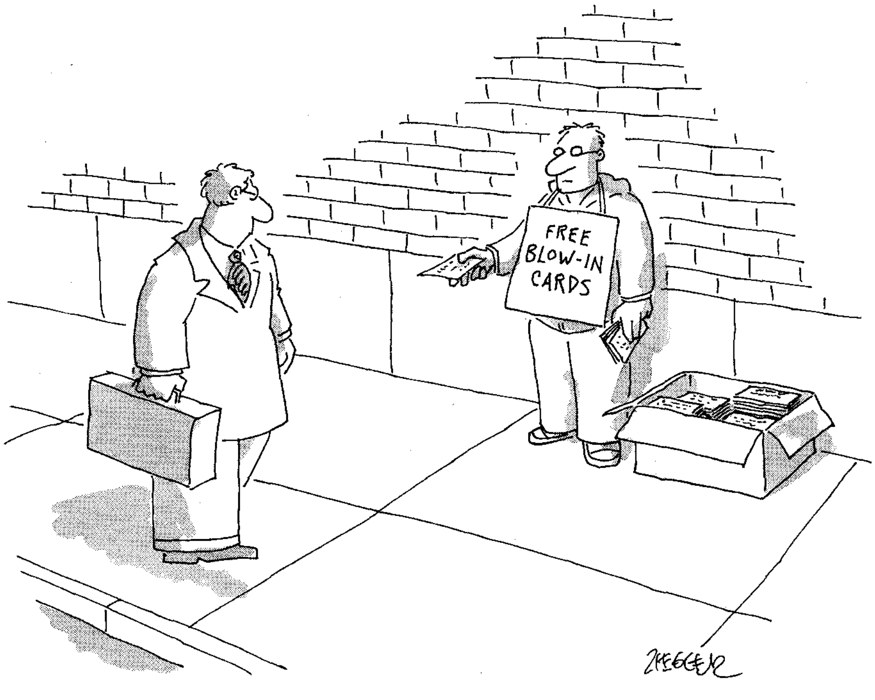
"Please leave me alone for a moment with the young lady," he said to Aunt Francisca. "I have something important to say to her that only she can hear."

"What impertinence!" her aunt replied. "There's nothing having to do with her that I can't hear."

"Then I won't say it," he said, "but I warn you that you will be responsible for whatever happens."

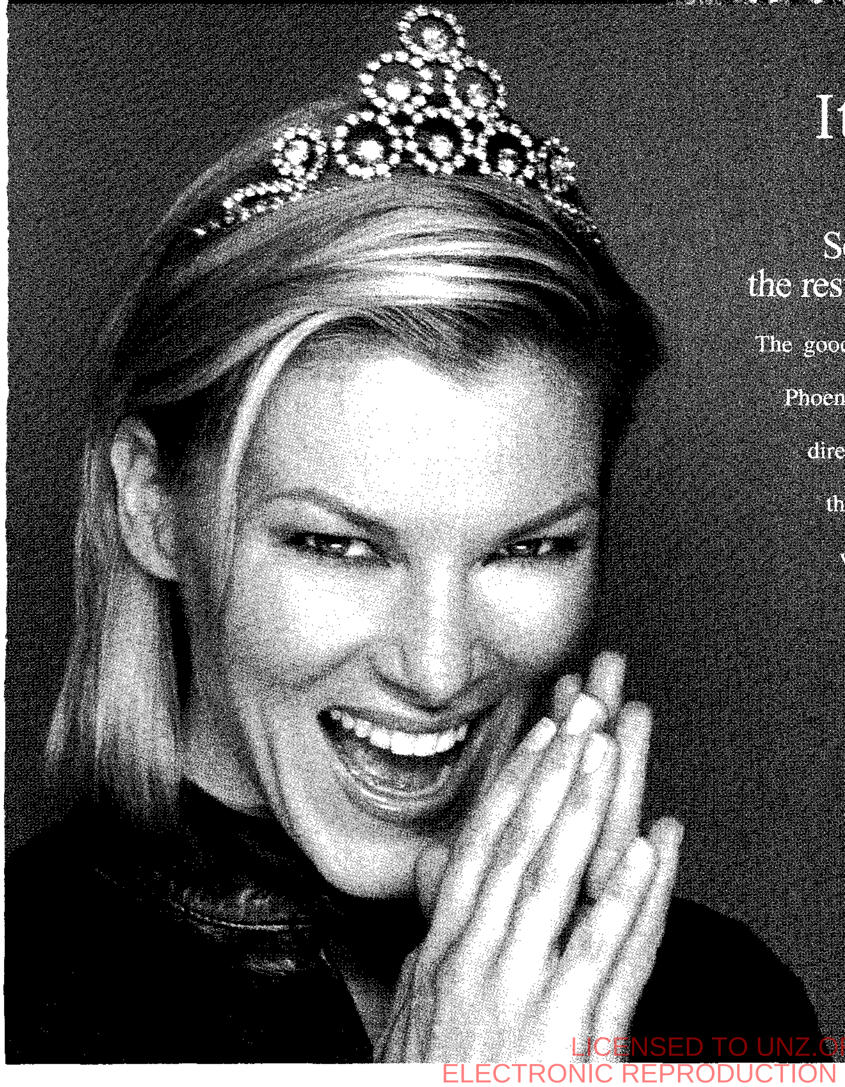
Luisa Santiaga begged her aunt to leave them alone and assumed the risk. Then Gabriel Eligio expressed his view that she should make the trip with her parents, in the manner they chose and however long it might take, but only on the condition that she give her promise as a solemn oath that she would marry him. She was pleased to accept the proposal, and added, on her own account, that only death could prevent their marriage.

They had almost a year to demonstrate the seriousness of their promises, but neither one imagined how much it would cost them. The first part of Luisa Santiaga's journey, in a caravan of drovers, where she rode on the back of a mule along the precipices of the Sierra Nevada, took two weeks. Luisa Santiaga and her mother were accompanied by "Chon," the maid without a name, who had been with the family since they left Barrancas in the aftermath of the duel in which the Colonel had killed Medardo Pacheco. The Colonel knew all about the steep, rocky route, for he had left a trail of children there on the dissipated nights of his wars, but his wife had chosen it without knowing it, because of her unhappy memories of what it meant to travel by schooner. For my mother, who rode a mule for the first time, it was a nightmare of brutal suns and ferocious downpours, her soul dangling by a thread because of the soporific air that rose from the gorges. Thoughts of an uncertain suitor, with his midnight clothes and his sunrise violin, seemed like tricks of the imagination. On the fourth day, feeling incapable of surviving, she warned her mother that she would throw herself over a cliff if they didn't return home. Tranquilina Iguarán Cotes, more frightened than her daughter, agreed. But the head mule driver showed her on the map that returning or continuing would take the same amount of time. Relief came in eleven days, when they saw, from the final cornice, the radiant plain of Valledupar.



Before the first stage was over, Gabriel Eligio secured a reliable way of communicating with his wandering love, thanks to the coöperation of the telegraph operators in the seven towns where she and her mother would stay before reaching Barrancas. And Luisa Santiaga made her own arrangements. The entire province was overflowing with people named Iguarán and Cotes, whose tribal consciousness had the strength of an impenetrable jungle, and she succeeded in bringing them over to her side. This allowed her to maintain a fevered correspondence with Gabriel Eligio from Valledupar, where she spent three months, until the end of the journey, almost a year later. She had only to pass by each town's telegraph office, where, with the complicity of her young, enthusiastic kinswomen, she could receive and respond to messages. The close-mouthed Chon played an invaluable role because she carried the messages hidden in her clothes, without making Luisa Santiaga uneasy or offending her modesty, since the maid couldn't read or write, and would, in any case, die before revealing a secret.

Almost sixty years later, when I tried to reconstruct these episodes in "Love in the Time of Cholera," I asked my father if in the professional jargon of telegraph operators there existed a specific word for linking one office to another. He didn't have to think about it: "pegging in." The term is in the dictionary, but not this specific sense; I used it anyway, since the telegraph offices communicated by connecting a peg on a panel of telegraphic terminals. I never discussed it again with



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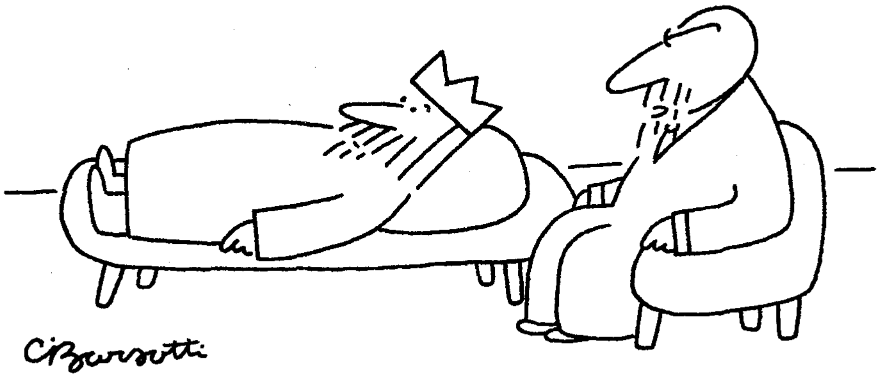


"Well, for example, people who don't have dungeons might spend their evenings playing cards or watching television."

my father. But shortly before his death he was asked in a newspaper interview if he had ever wanted to write a novel, and he answered that he had stopped when I asked him about the verb "pegging in," because he realized then that the novel I was writing was the same one he had been planning to write.

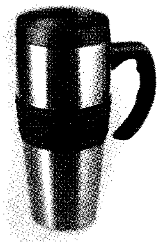
On that occasion he also recalled a dark fact that could have changed our lives. After six months of travelling, when my mother was in San Juan del César, Gabriel Eligio was told in confidence that Luisa Santiaga's mother was preparing the way for the family's permanent return to Barrancas, provided that the rancor caused by the death of Medardo Pacheco in his duel with the Colonel had healed. It seemed ludicrous, when the bad times were behind us, and the family, now in Aracataca, was enjoying the absolute imperium of the banana company, which was beginning to resemble a dream of the promised land. But it was also reasonable that the obstinacy of the family would lead them to sacrifice their own happiness if they could free their daughter from the talons of the hawk. Gabriel Eligio's immediate decision was to request a transfer to the telegraph office in Riohacha, some twenty leagues from Barrancas. The position wasn't available, but he was promised that his application would be kept in mind.

Luisa Santiaga could not confirm her mother's secret intentions, but she didn't dare deny them, either, for she had noticed that the closer Mina came to Barrancas, the more soulful and peaceable she seemed. Chon, who was everyone's confidante, gave her no clues. To get at the truth, Luisa Santiaga told her mother that she would love to stay in Barrancas and live there. Her mother had a moment's hesitation but said nothing, and the daughter was left with the impression that she had come very close to the secret. Troubled, she escaped into the destiny of the cards with a street Gypsy who didn't say anything about a future in Barrancas but did say there would be no obstacles to Luisa Santiaga's enjoying a long, happy life with a distant man she barely knew who would love her until death. The Gypsy's description of the man returned Luisa Santiaga's soul to her body, for the man described had many of the qualities she saw in her beloved. And the Gypsy also predicted, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that my mother would have six children with this man. "I died of fright," my mother said the first time she told me this, not even imagining that the actual number of her children would be almost double that. The lovers both accepted the prediction with so much enthusiasm that their telegraphic correspondence stopped being a concert of fanciful declarations and became methodical, practical, and more intense than ever. They set dates, established means, and devoted their lives to their shared determination to marry without consulting anyone, wherever and however they met again.

Luisa Santiaga was so faithful to their commitment that in the town of Fonseca she didn't think it correct to attend a gala ball without her lover's consent. Gabriel Eligio was in the hammock sweating out a fever of a hundred and three when he heard the signal for an urgent incoming message. It was the telegraph operator in Fonseca. To guarantee absolute security, the operator asked who was at the other end of the line. More astonished than gratified, Gabriel Eligio transmitted an identifying phrase: "Tell her I'm her godson." My mother recognized the password and stayed at the dance until seven in the morning, when she had to rush to change her clothes so she wouldn't be late for Mass.

In Barrancas, there was no trace of animosity toward the family. On the contrary, eighteen years after the unfortunate duel, a Christian spirit of forgiving and forgetting prevailed among the relatives of Medardo Pacheco. His kinfolk gave Luisa Santiaga and her mother such an affectionate welcome that now it was Luisa Santiaga who thought about the possibility of returning to this mountain oasis, so different from the heat, the dust, the bloodthirsty Saturdays, and the headless ghosts of Aracataca. She managed to suggest this to Gabriel Eligio, provided that he obtained his transfer to Riohacha, and he agreed. However, she also learned around this time that the story of the family's move to Barrancas was unfounded; no one wanted it except Mina. This was established in a letter she had sent to her son Juan de Dios, after he wrote her, expressing his fears about returning to Barrancas before the twenty years required by the law of La Guajira had passed after the death of Medardo Pacheco. (The law was also that an affront to one member of a family had to be paid for by all the males in the offending family.) For he remained so convinced of the inescapability of this law that half a century later he opposed his son Eduardo's joining the public-health service in Barrancas.

Despite all these fears, the knotty situation was untangled in the next three days. On the same Tuesday that Luisa Santiaga confirmed that Mina was not planning to move to Barrancas, Gabriel Eligio was informed that the position in Riohacha was now available owing to the sudden death of the telegraph operator there. The next day, Mina emptied the drawers in the pantry, looking for poultry shears, and happened to open a tin of English biscuits where her daughter had hidden her love telegrams. Mina's rage was so great that she managed to express only one of her celebrated insults: "God forgives everything except disobe-



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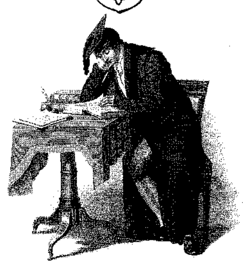

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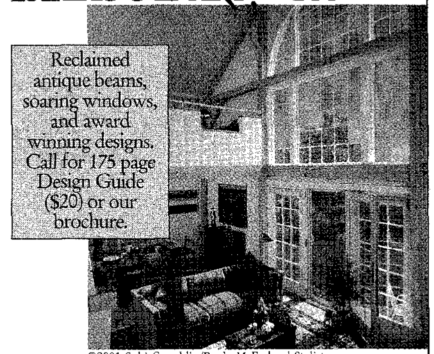

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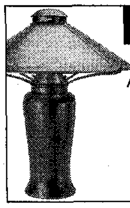

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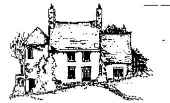

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dience." That weekend, they travelled to Riohacha and boarded the schooner to Santa Marta. Neither woman noticed the awful night of battering February gales: the mother was too devastated by defeat; the daughter, terrified, was too happy. Solid ground restored the composure Mina had lost when she discovered the letters. The next day, she returned alone to Aracataca on the seven-o'clock train, and left Luisa Santiaga in Santa Marta under the protection of her son Juan de Dios, certain that she had rescued her daughter from the demons of love. The opposite was true: Gabriel Eligio would travel from Aracataca to Santa Marta to see Luisa Santiaga whenever he could. Uncle Juanito had resolved not to take sides, having been burned by hard experience, and at the moment of truth found himself trapped between adoration for his sister and respect for his parents, and took refuge in a formula characteristic of his proverbial goodness: he allowed the lovers to see each other *outside* his house, but never alone, and never with his knowledge. Dilia Caballero, his wife, who forgave but did not forget, devised for her sister-in-law the same infallible coincidences and strategies she had used to undermine the vigilance of her in-laws.

And so Gabriel Eligio and Luisa Santiaga began seeing each other in the houses of friends, and then risked appearances in public places that were not too crowded. And, in the end, they dared to talk through the window when Uncle Juanito was not at home, Luisa Santiaga in the living room, Gabriel Eligio on the street, faithful to their commitment not to see each other in the house. The window was made, it seemed, for the purpose of forbidden love, with Andalusian grillwork and a frame of climbing vines that featured an occasional dizzying breath of jasmine in the drowsy night. Uncle Juanito's wife had anticipated everything, including the use of certain complicit neighbors who whistled in code to alert the lovers to any imminent danger. One night, however, the precautions failed, and Uncle Juanito surrendered to the truth. His wife took advantage of the occasion to invite the lovers to sit in the living room with the windows open so they could share their love with the world. My mother never forgot her brother's sigh: "What a relief!"

At about this time Gabriel Eligio received his formal appointment to the telegraph office in Riohacha. Unsettled by another separation, my mother appealed to Monsignor Pedro Espejo, the vicar of the diocese, in the hope that he would marry them without her parents' permission. The Monsignor had grown so renowned that many of the faithful confused the veneration they felt for him with saintliness, and some attended his Masses only to confirm that, at the moment of the Elevation, he rose several centimetres off the ground. When Luisa Santiaga asked for his help, he refused to interfere in the jurisdiction of a family so jealous of its privacy, but chose instead to find out in secret about my father's family, through the curia. The parish priest in Sincé ignored the liberties enjoyed by Argemira García and replied with a benevolent formula: "This is a respectable though not very devout family." Then the Monsignor spoke with the lovers, together and separately, and wrote a letter to the Colonel and Mina, in which he expressed his heartfelt certainty that there was no human power capable of suppressing this obdurate love. My grandparents, defeated by the power of God, agreed to turn a painful page, and they granted their son Juan de Dios full power to arrange the wedding in Santa Marta. They did not attend but sent Francisca Simodosea as matron of honor.

My parents married on June 11, 1926, in the cathedral of Santa Marta, forty minutes late because the bride forgot the date and had to be awakened after eight o'clock in the morning. That same night they again boarded the fearful schooner, so that Gabriel Eligio could take possession of the telegraph office in Riohacha, and passed their first night together in chastity, defeated by seasickness.

My mother was so nostalgic about the house where she spent her honeymoon that her older children could have described it, room by room, as if we had lived there, and even today it continues to be one of my false memories. And yet the first time I actually went to Riohacha, not long before my sixtieth birthday, I was surprised that the telegraph operator's house had nothing to do with my memory. And the idyllic Riohacha I had carried in my heart since boyhood, with its saltpetre streets that went down to a sea of mud, was nothing more than the poignant fantasy of my imagination. In fact, now that I know Riohacha, I cannot visualize it as it is, but only as I constructed it, stone by stone, without knowing it, through my mother's memories.

Two months after the wedding, Juan de Dios received a telegram from my father announcing that Luisa Santiaga was pregnant. The news was passed on to Aracataca and shook the very foundations of the family house, where Mina had not yet recovered from her bitterness, and both she and the Colonel laid down their weapons so that the newlyweds would come back to stay with them. It wasn't easy. After a noble, reasoned resistance that lasted several months, Gabriel Eligio agreed to his wife's giving birth in her parents' house.

A short while later, my grandfather greeted him at the train station with a sentence that was like a gold frame around the family's historical record: "I am prepared to give you all the satisfactions that may be required." My grandmother renovated the bedroom that had been hers and installed my parents there. Over the course of the year, Gabriel Eligio gave up his worthy profession of telegraph operator and devoted his talent as an autodidact to a science on the decline: homeopathy. My grandfather, out of gratitude or remorse, arranged with the authorities for the street where we lived in Aracataca to bear the name it still has: Monsignor Espejo Avenue.

That was how the first of seven boys and four girls was born in Aracataca on March 6, 1927, in an unseasonable torrential downpour, while the sky of Taurus rose on the horizon. I was almost strangled by the umbilical cord, because the family midwife, Santos Villero, lost her mastery of her art at the worst moment. But Aunt Francisca lost even more, for she ran to the street door shouting, as if there were a fire, "A boy! It's a boy!" And then, as if sounding the alarm, "A boy who's choking to death!"

There was rum that the family assumed was not for celebrating but for rubbing on the newborn to revive him. Miss Juana de Freytes, a great Venezuelan lady who made a providential entrance into the bedroom, often told me that the most serious risk came not from the umbilical cord but from my mother's dangerous position on the bed. She corrected it in time, but it wasn't easy to revive me, and so Aunt Francisca poured the emergency baptismal water over me. I should have been named Olegario, the saint of the day, but nobody had the saints' calendar near at hand, and with a sense of urgency they gave me my father's first name, Gabriel, followed by José, for Joseph the Carpenter, because he was the patron saint of Aracataca and March was his month. Miss Juana de Freytes proposed a third name in memory of the general reconciliation achieved among families and friends with my arrival into the world, but in the formal rite of baptism, three years later, they forgot to include it: Gabriel José de la Concordia. ♦

Translated, from the Spanish, by Edith Grossman.

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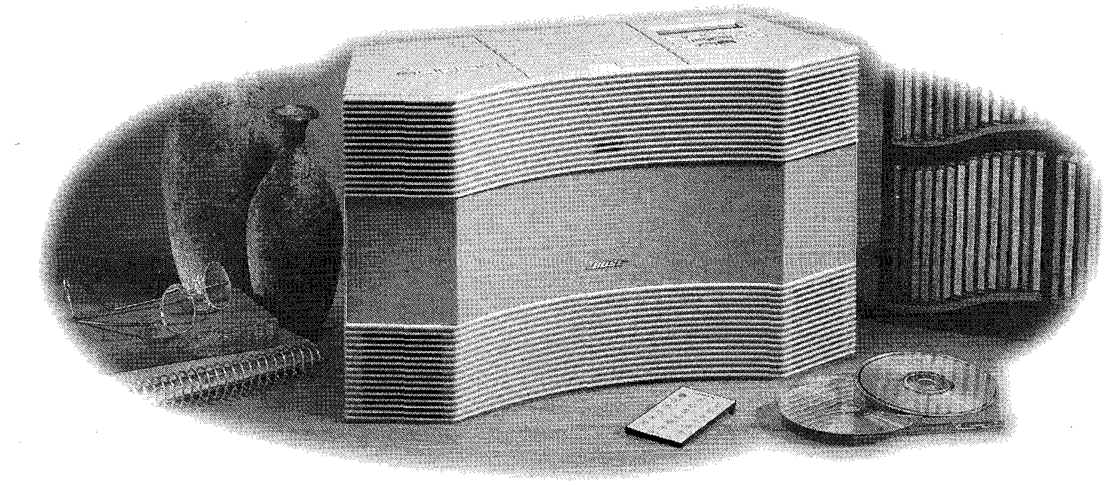

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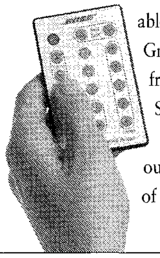

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NEW YORK JOURNAL

RIKERS HIGH

How do you teach teen-agers in a New York City jail?

BY ADAM GOPNIK

Although Rikers Island, in New York City, is the biggest jail in North America, most New Yorkers who don't have to go there don't know where it is. A lot of people seem to think that it's in New York Harbor; others confuse it with Randalls Island, where the Cosmos used to play; and others will tell you that it's the huge scary fenced-in building you see just off the approaches to the Triborough Bridge. (It isn't; that's the Manhattan Psychiatric Center.) On most familiar New York maps, Rikers is a blank. On the subway map, its existence is artfully hidden by a long legend about the intricacies of the Nos. 2 and 5 trains, and on the map of New York in the back of taxicabs it is just left out.

Most comfortable New Yorkers have seen Rikers Island, though, and many times. Rikers Island is right across the bay—no more than a decent outfielder's throw—from the runway opposite the American Airlines terminal at LaGuardia. If you are arriving at LaGuardia from the west, you see it in great detail out of the right-hand window. You will know it when you pass over it because it is one of the few places in New York where the street grid is completely broken. The buildings are set in disordered lots, at strange angles—laid out as if at random. Two long, snaking chain-link fences topped with razor wire wrap around the jails and give the island, seen from above, its only continuous shape. There are five strands of razor ribbon on the inner fence, and five more on the outer fence. The people on the island who are allowed to get around get around in cars or buses, as in Los Angeles. The absence of people is reassuring to birds. There are flocks of Canada geese, and it is not unusual to see a pheasant loping along in the fence's shadow. Not long ago, there was a rare sighting of a turkey vulture.

Rikers is an island of weary confinement and elaborate euphemism—a place where, though there are many prisoners in a jail under the eyes of guards, those three words are never spoken. Prisoners are inmates, jails are facilities, and guards are officers. It contains, on average, fourteen thousand inmates, eight thousand officers, two boats, eleven kitchens, and one good school for boys.

The school is called the Austin H. MacCormick Island Academy, or, usually, just the Island Academy. It is an official New York City alternative high school, and has been in existence for fifteen years. (An earlier school there got rechristened.) It is one of the few places in New York, and maybe in the nation, where the exhausted vocabulary of rehabilitation and reform is still vital—where people still say the words, and still believe in the words they're saying. It offers math, English, and social studies, classes in cooking, television production, and computer programming; it has a poetry magazine, *The Slammer*, and even an alumni association. Although it has been called by cynics "a Dalton for delinquents," most people who know crime in New York feel that the school, along with its crucial alumni organization, Friends of Island Academy, may be the best hope a sixteen-year-old kid who ends up on Rikers has not to end up someplace like Rikers again.

The boys who go to the academy live in a dormitory across a narrow alley from the school. They are between sixteen and eighteen but look either twelve or forty-five—either younger and more confused than most teen-agers or a lot more hard-eyed and knowing. In a typical intake of eighty boys, there is perhaps one white face and twenty or so Hispanic ones. The others are black. All the boys dress in prison uniforms that are called "beiges"—a beige long-sleeved cotton shirt and

MARCELLUS HALL

loose beige cotton trousers. Sometimes, the teen-agers wear long underwear underneath. On a typical winter morning, the students, or inmates, line up in the entry hall of the dormitory facility and are marched out and across the alley to the school. Officer Hermon Simpson, who has been at the academy since it opened, calls out a chant, and the boys respond, repeating his words in unison. The boys are crowded together, and the drab uniforms and the rhythmic chanting give the morning scene a look somewhere between Solzhenitsyn and the first song in "Oliver!"

"Stay out of the hallways!" the keeper cries, deep basso.

"Stay out of the hallways!" the kids respond.

"Respect the teachers! Don't touch the doorknobs!"

"Don't touch the doorknobs! No horseplaying!"

"No fighting on the school floor!" They are made to repeat this one three times, rising and falling: "No fighting on the school floor! *No fighting on the school floor!* No fighting on the school floor!"

"Who do you love?" the officer demands, without transitional pause.

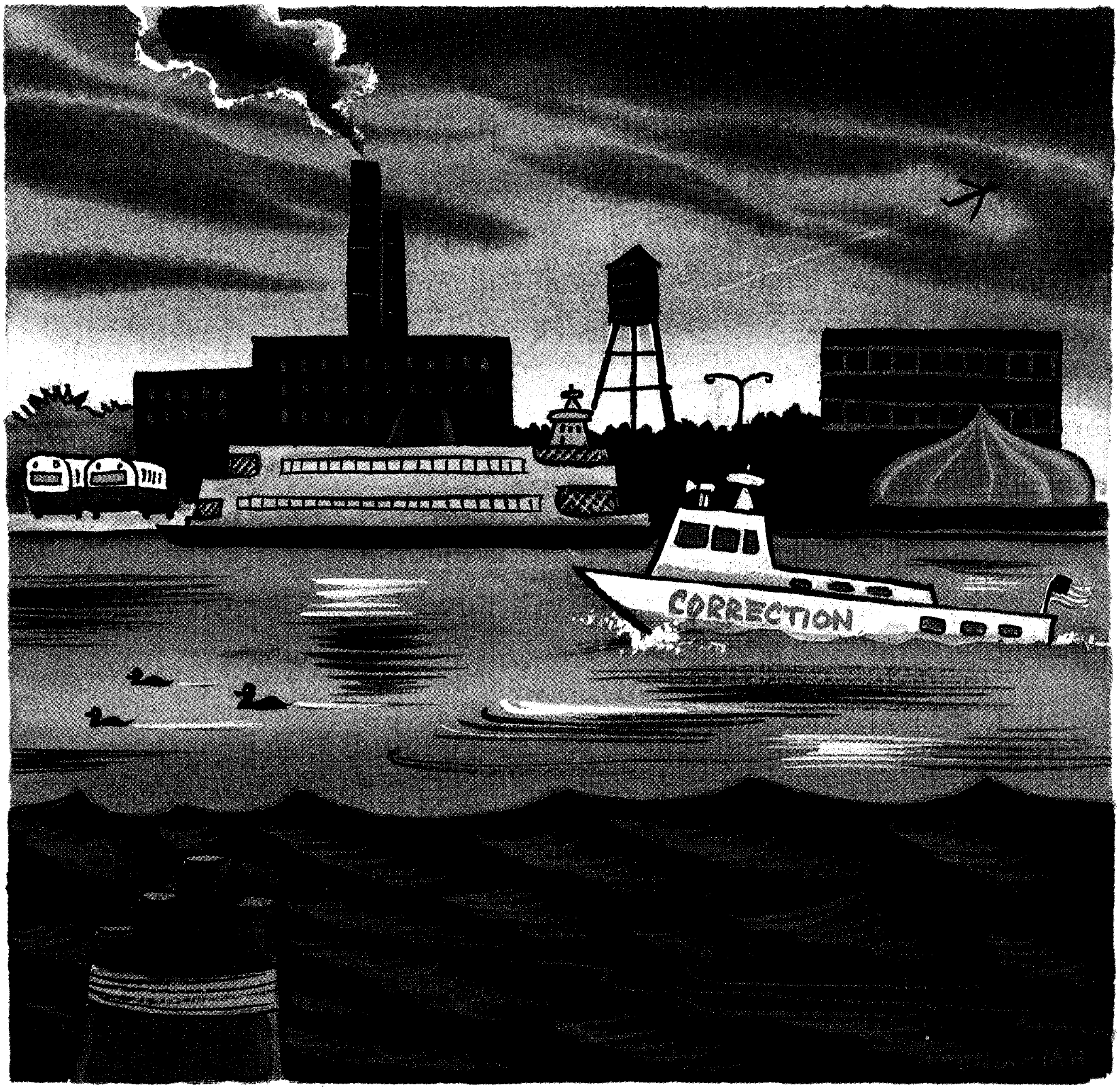
The boys have been taught the answer. "Myself!" they cry.

"Act like you do!"

Simpson suddenly becomes subdued. "O.K., gentlemen," he says. "Proceed."

They pass through a metal detector, one by one, and then they are in a high-school hall like any other inner-city high-school hall: green-painted cinder block covered with posters announcing events ("Lecture This Friday: 'You and the Computer' ") and quotations from Martin Luther King, Jr., and Malcolm X.

The Austin H. MacCormick Island Academy is named after one of the pio-



"I did an assault robbery in the second degree," a seventeen-year-old former inmate says, explaining how he ended up on Rikers Island. "I got cut seven times and stabbed in my sleep. Then I changed dormitories, and I got took to the school."

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Between the black rift
where the moon hung
and the grasses drenched
after a noonday downpour
the old fury in my brain
had floated far off
into the deepening calm,
as if the moon could see me
for the ghost I am.

—*Brooks Haxton*

neer reformers in the New York State prison system—MacCormick was the city's corrections commissioner under Fiorello LaGuardia—and was founded in his spirit, even though Rikers is not, strictly speaking, a prison. It is a jail: most of the inmates are awaiting trial or waiting to be transferred to a prison upstate. Many adolescents who have committed crimes, however, get sentenced to a year's imprisonment or less, and these kids are kept on Rikers Island. If they are younger than eighteen, male, and have not graduated from high school, state law requires them to go to the Island Academy.

Isaac Morris is seventeen and has been out of Rikers since October. Soft-voiced and gentle-eyed, he is now a regular at Friends. "I did an assault robbery in the second degree," he says, explaining how he got to Rikers. "I was homeless and I needed money. It was the early morning and I was hungry. I did it the wrong way. I robbed people because I was living on the streets and sleeping in the trains.

"When I got to Rikers, the thing is, I'm not used to sleeping with a whole bunch of strangers. I don't want to be there. I had to fight for my clothes. I got cut seven times and stabbed in my sleep because I came in with a pair of jeans on that someone wanted. Then I changed dormitories, and I got took to the school."

Most of the students at the Island Academy come from seven New York neighborhoods: East New York, Bushwick, Bedford-Stuyvesant, the South Bronx, Harlem, Washington Heights, and Jamaica. A typical day at the Island Academy is like a typical day at a high school in those neighborhoods. The kids in the back row sleep; the kids in the front row listen, eagerly and a little uncomprehendingly; and the teachers pray that they're getting through. The goal here, though, is not to teach the kids but to make them think they might be students.

"We've got kids who hate school, fear school," Mike Pines, the current principal, says, "and all we want to do is make them think that school might be O.K. Our real goal isn't to get them to graduate from here—they don't stay long enough—but to get them started on studying for the G.E.D., the high-school-equivalency exam, and help them stay with passing it once they're out."

The liveliest sessions at the Island Academy are therefore not so much about subjects as about attitudes and vocabulary. Rich McClain, who is twenty-eight, is one of the successes of the academy and of Friends, which was founded in 1989 by Barbara Grodd, a retired social worker who once directed substance-abuse services on Rikers, and Norma Green, a former principal of the Island Academy.

McClain, an ex-dealer, got his high-school diploma, and he specializes in "youth development"—that is, coming back to Rikers to talk to the students. He makes lists of words that will hurt you and lists of words that will lift you. On a recent morning, he began, as he usually does, by writing a long list of hurtful words on the left side of the blackboard in one of the academy classrooms, while twenty or so boys in beiges looked on.

"O.K., what have I got on the left-hand side?" McClain demanded.

" 'Drugs'!"

" 'Violence'!"

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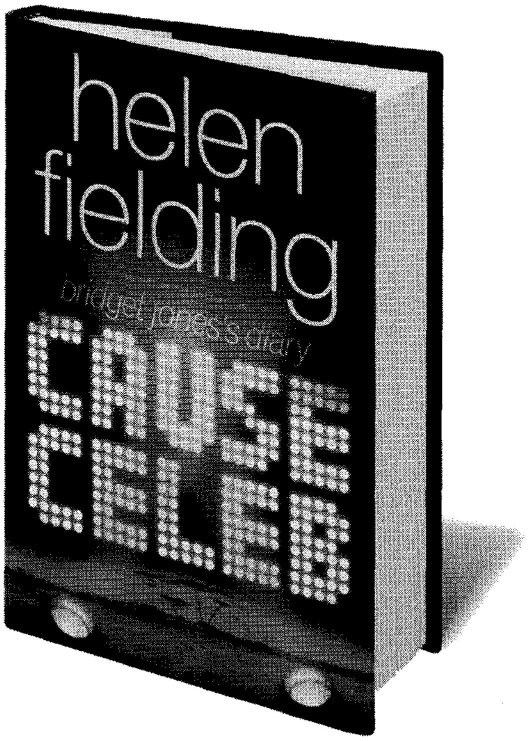
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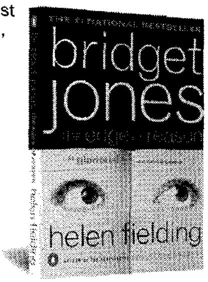
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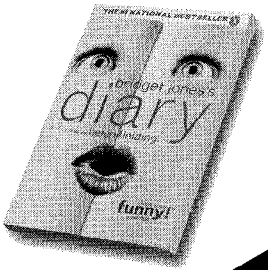
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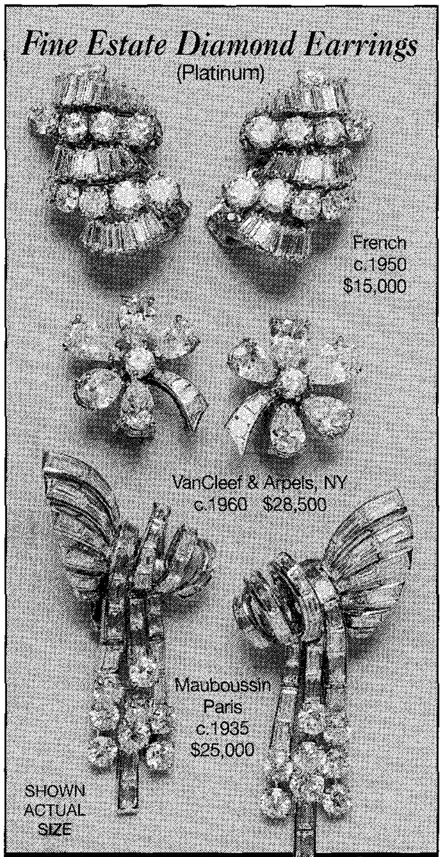

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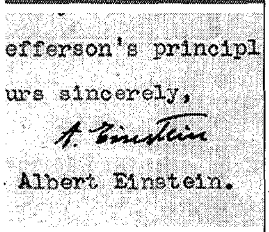
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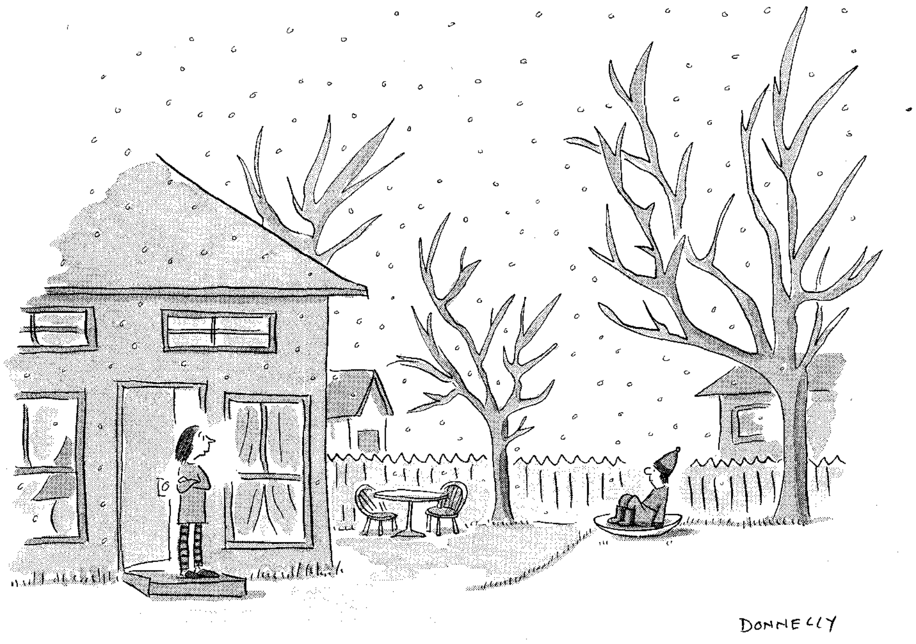

"Honey, come inside. It's going to take a while to accumulate."

• •

“ ‘Peer pressure,’ ‘incarceration’!” the boys read off.

“ ‘Babies having babies, teen-age pregnancy,’ ” they read.

“Me, too. I was a victim of that,” one kid called out.

“You mean you was that or you did that?” another student asked. “You was a teen-age pregnancy or you caused a teen-age pregnancy?”

“Well, actually, both,” he replied.

“C’mon—more words,” Rich exhorted. “What else?”

“Fashion!” someone cries.

Rich stopped to think. “Well, you have that on the right side, too. Look at me,” he said, daring the class to imply that the straight life had rendered him less modish. Then he began scribbling the last words on the left side: “Poor eating habits.”

“How many brothers got time to cook a meal?” he asked, by way of explanation.

“I always close shop to eat,” said one of the until-that-moment-sleeping students in the back, very offended.

“Be real. You’re going to chicken shops. The hair is still on the chickens. You go in the chicken shops, you don’t know—you got a mouse in there,” Rich argued, almost plaintively.

“I eat good,” the boy repeated. “My girlfriend cook for me—it’s good food. It’s healthy. It’s not a chicken shop. I always closed to eat.”

“Poor self-esteem!” another student called out, seeming to want to put the food debate behind. McClain smiled and wrote that down, too.

A lot of the kids at the academy are in jail for what they call “CPW3”—a phrase they pronounce quickly and almost affectionately, like the name of the Star Wars robot. “CPW3” means Criminal Possession of a Weapon in the Third Degree, and “the third degree” means the weapon was loaded. The kinds of kids who a decade ago might have been charged with petty drug possession are now likely to be sentenced for armed robberies and assaults. Although there are fewer street crimes in the city, many people will tell you that there are far more organized and violent crimes. The Bloods, the Los Angeles gang famous for its drive-by killings, have spread right through the seven neighborhoods.

A surprising number of the kids on Rikers ended up there right after they changed neighborhoods—going, say, from a childhood with a grandmother in Bedford-Stuyvesant to staying with an aunt (and attending school) in the South Bronx. Brian Pearson is twenty-four, and one of the most admired figures at Friends. After a career as a crack dealer, he got his G.E.D.; he is now a peer counsellor at a school in the South Bronx and is working on a degree at LaGuardia Community College. He is expecting a daughter this spring. "I done been through homes, shelters, hotels," he recalls. "I got a lot of stuff. I was running with the hotel dudes, from the Martinique, when I was little. I dropped out in ninth grade when I went to Astoria, it was, like, I had been on the wrestling team before, but now I was in a new place and all new people and I just made friends at the high school with the beer-smoking-and-go-get-weed crowd—who were like the hotel dudes, and they were, you know, the hangout-type group."

The brighter kids absorb the therapeutic and career-guidance vocabulary of their teachers, and cling to it, like shipwrecked sailors to a raft that might get them safe to shore. If you ask one student why he was first arrested in, say, Ohio, he will say, "Well, we relocated the dealing out of state in order, you know, to help increase the income stream." And if you ask another how he ended up in jail he will say, "It was a lot of armed robberies which I couldn't see then that I had no self-esteem." A lot of time at the academy is spent with language itself; the poems that the inmates produce, for instance, can be memorable, and, though many of them begin with the familiar iambic rap rhythm, they more often escape it. Not long ago, *The Slammer* published a poem by a student named Jarett Williams:

My real enemy is someone
I know very well.
He is everywhere I go,
following me and haunting me,
Wanting me to be him,
Which I am.

"O.K., now the words on the right," Rich McClain went on, that morning, like a switch-hitter crossing the plate after a change of pitchers. "What are the opposite words I got?" He waited, chalk in hand, in the eternal position of the schoolteacher.

"Jobs!" a boy said.

"Any girl you want?" the next student said.

"No—you know what we call them?" McClain corrected. "Women."

"Respect! Confidence!" another student cried.

"Right!" McClain said. "Before, the

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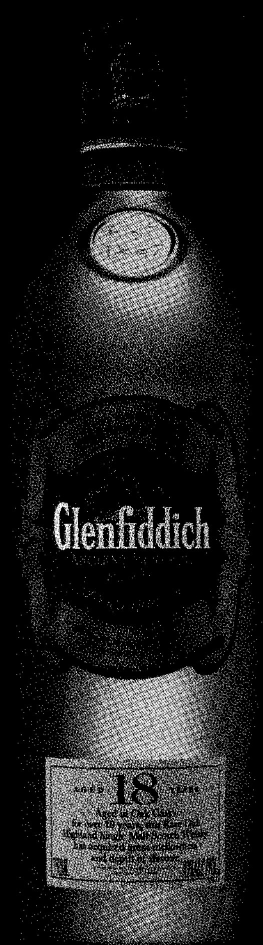

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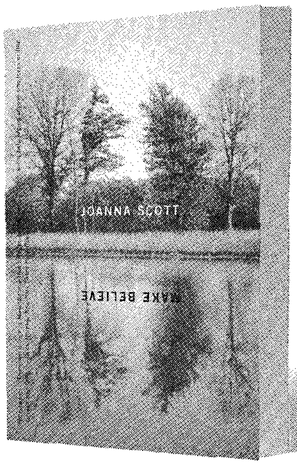

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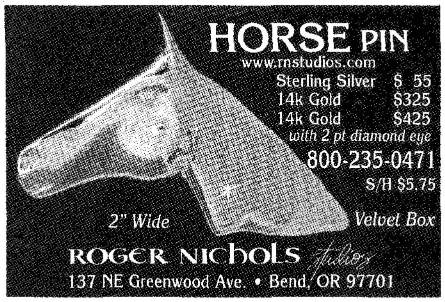

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police was, like—you come here. Now it's, like, I got health insurance, I got bank cards—now the police is like, excuse me, Mr. McClain. Now they like, O.K., Mr. McClain."

"No peer pressure!" someone cried.

"What's the opposite of peer pressure?" Rich asked, and answered his own question. "Peer approval! The peers are down with what I'm doing. As for sex—I have good sex. I have kids. And now I'm not their father—I'm their daddy. A person they know about, a person they know." He looked at the list, and found the word "drugs" on the left side.

"Forty ounces?" someone suggested.

He caught the student's eye. "Fine wine," he said, and wrote that down on the right.

"Possibilities," one student called out suddenly, apropos of nothing.

"That's a good one," Rich said, and wrote it down, too.

Friends of Island Academy has its office at 500 Eighth Avenue, one of the few buildings near Times Square that still have the dusty, mixed-up, welfare-office look that so many buildings there had twenty years ago. Friends, a private, nonprofit group, offers classes, counselling, mentoring, help in finding jobs, and, what may be most important, a constant sympathetic ear to kids who find themselves out of jail but back in the same neighborhood, with the same problems. The people who work at Friends are the most unjaded group of reformers you could hope to meet, and every day they give dignity to the rusty term "social work." The office is run by a gentle, dedicated woman named Beth Navon. Former students of the academy come in and out, studying for their G.E.D., asking for counselling, looking for a job.

"Friends of Academy got me a job working at McDonald's at Penn Station from nine to twelve and four to ten," Isaac Morris says. "It's good for, like, my temper, because I'm working the register and it's like, people are saying, 'Give me some fries.' And I have to say the right thing, I say, 'What size, sir? We have medium, large, and supersize.' I'm supposed to say, 'You like fries with that?' when they order something else, but I'm not even there to saying that yet, I'm just keeping my temper when people talk to me about the size of the fries." Isaac intends to join the Navy someday and study computers.

Recently, Friends has had some nice attention. The organization won a Robin Hood award, and Rich McClain, among others, was featured on a "20/20" program, where the group's successes were called "Street Miracles." The people at Friends, though, know that there are no miracles—that, while new possibilities begin with learning new words at the academy, they can't end there. ("Rich himself is a wonderful model, but so far he's a model of being a model," one of the veterans of Friends says.)

Kids who have been through the academy and stuck with Friends have an "avoidance" rate of nearly eighty per cent—eight out of ten of them never go back to jail. Without help, six out of ten will. These figures can be seen skeptically, because the reconviction rate, which such statistics count, is not the same as the re-arrest rate, which is certainly higher. Still, eight students who had been to the Island Academy and stayed with Friends got their G.E.D. in the last school year, and already in this school year four have.

A jail is a strange place to be instructed in the power and the futility of words. Most people who fly into LaGuardia and pass over Rikers Island have routines learned in childhood which they have only occasionally had to put into words: people with self-esteem and peer approval often don't know that's what they have. The teachers and counsellors who are left with the kids looking at the planes, though, have words, and in some ways only words, to begin fixing a lifetime of habits that, in almost every case, were there before the kids had a chance to choose.

Words are like bullets that can pass right through one body without touching anything vital, tear another apart. The possibility of possibilities transforms the listener or leaves him baffled; and which it will be seems, at least to the outsider, as haphazard as grace. For the moment, even if the seventeen-year-olds get to go home when they're supposed to, they are sent into the world late at night at the Queensboro Plaza subway station with only their clothes, a memory of the vocabulary on the right side of the blackboard, a MetroCard worth three rides, and the address and phone number of the Friends of Island Academy. ♦

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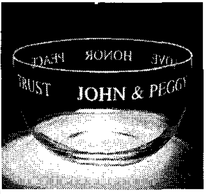

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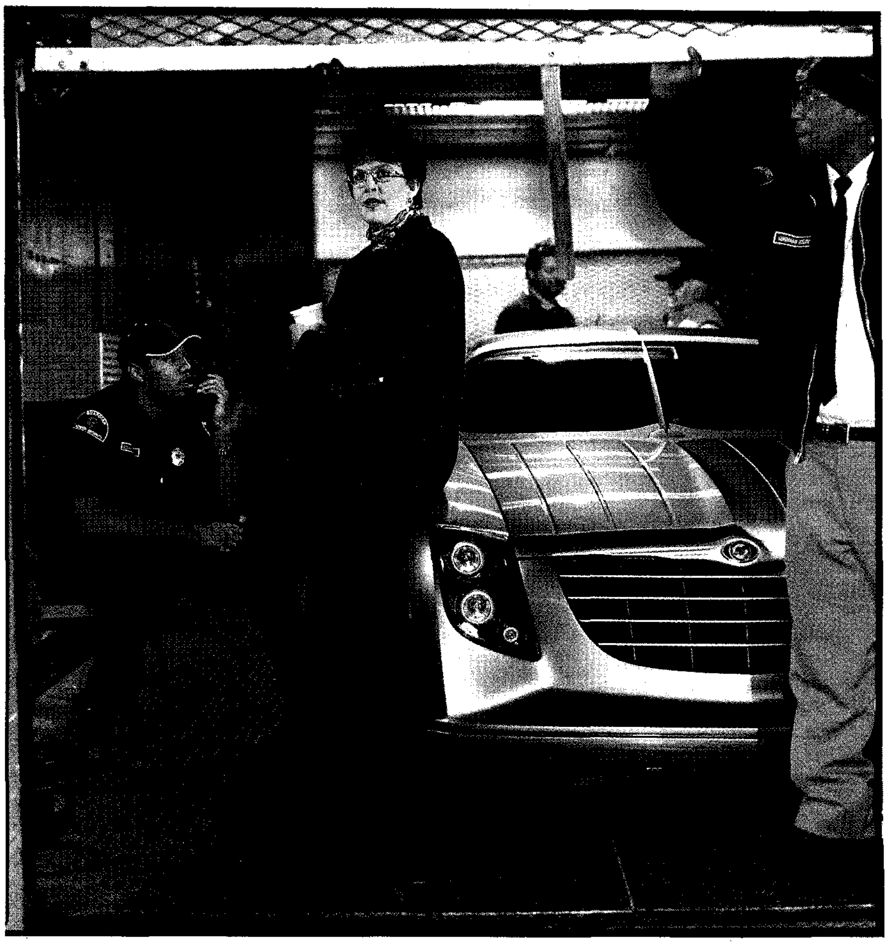

Jean Jennings regularly shocks the car world. Photograph by Martin Schoeller.

Jean Jennings and Dr. Leadfoot drive very, very fast. Dr. Leadfoot has another name, under which she practices gynecology in Ann Arbor, Michigan, presumably at approved speeds. Jean Jennings is one of Dr. Leadfoot's patients; she is also the editor-in-chief of *Automobile* and is always on the move. One recent morning, Jean and the doctor were heading down to Louisiana so they could go shoot some ducks. They were in a silver 2001 Chevrolet Suburban loaded with three boxes of ammunition; three shotguns; Jean's two Chesapeake Bay retrievers (Ronald and Sandra Lou); camouflage shirts, jackets, pants, shoes, umbrellas; me; and a six-pack of Diet Coke. Their plan was to leave Ann Arbor by five-thirty in the morning and drive straight through—fill-ups and bathroom visits only, except for a rolling stop in Nashville to drop me at the airport—ending up in a duck blind near New Orleans by the next dawn. To manage this, they were going to have to average about eighty-five miles an hour. The two of them had never travelled together before. Jean, who is used to being the fastest driver wherever she goes, hadn't been sure what to expect from her gynecologist, but, fortunately, Dr. Leadfoot did not disappoint.

"This vehicle corners pretty good at ninety, Jeannie," the doctor said, wrenching the Suburban to the right.

"It sure as hell does," Jean said. "Even

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now that it's raining pretty goddam hard."

"Hey, Jeannie," the doctor said. "That goddam Robo DUK better be there when we get to Louisiana." The Robo DUK is a hunting decoy that Jean had ordered the day before. Suddenly, a yellow car streaked past us on the right. "Son of a bitch," the doctor said. "That Mustang is hauling ass. Let's see if I can get him."

"He's gone, Doc," Jean said, leaning forward to check out the Mustang. "Whew. He's in the next county already. That dude's cookin' with gas."

"Shit," the doctor said disconsolately. She pushed the Suburban up to ninety-five and closed in on a muddy truck lumbering along in the left lane. She braked sharply and then looked at Jean and rolled her eyes.

"Another member of the Anti-Destination League," Jean said. "Un-fucking-believable." She and Dr. Leadfoot discussed passing the truck on the right, but the doctor thought that if the driver realized he was being passed by women in a Suburban he might have a psychiatric event. We lumbered along behind the truck; we were going maybe eighty.

The dogs shifted in their beds, sighed, and fell asleep, twitching their feet. The truck pulled into the right lane and quickly disappeared in our rearview mirror. Jean traced our route on a map with her index finger, and then suddenly realized that she was still wearing chrome-colored nail polish from the night before, when she had attended a black-tie charity event at the North American International Auto Show, in Detroit. "Shit, I have to get rid of this polish," she said, waving a finger. "I don't want to flare a duck."

"You know what I like to do when I drive?" Dr. Leadfoot said, ignoring the issue of Jean's nails. "I like to find another professional speeder. Then I just lock in behind him and go."

"Same here," Jean said.

"I'm just happier when I'm locked right in with another speeder," the doctor went on, pushing toward ninety-five.

"But not just any speeder," Jean said. "I want to be behind someone who's speeding *well*."

The fastest Jean has ever driven is a hundred and sixty-five miles an hour. This was in a Porsche Turbo that she was driving on a test track, and she says that it was so frightening she could hardly breathe. The fastest she has ever driven on an open road is a hundred and fifty-five miles an hour; she was in a Porsche 911 on U.S. 60 in New Mexico, and she quite enjoyed it. She has also motorcycled across China; driven through New Zealand in a 1916 Benz; crossed the Alps in an MGB with the racing legend Stirling Moss; tested the first production model Dodge Viper in Los Angeles during the 1992 riots; and trained for an off-road endurance trial called the Camel Trophy the year it was held in Madagascar. Only men are allowed to enter the Camel Trophy. When Jean couldn't persuade organizers to let her in, she sat in a hotel lobby with a group of prostitutes and listened to reports of the competition on the radio. She has won only one race, a demolition derby.

Jean is one of the few people I've met whose personality is actually infectious. It is a surprise that more people who hang around with her don't just drop what they're doing, hop in a convertible, and set out across the Mojave or the Rockies. At the very least, almost everyone who spends time around her begins displaying Jean-like qualities: they talk loudly, swear, laugh robustly, drop the "g"s at the end of gerunds, pinch other individuals—regardless of their station in life—on the ass, and break the speed limit. Advanced Jeanisms include duck hunting, pheasant hunting, and the perfecting of several jaw-droppingly accurate impersonations of Scottish car designers, Cajun winos, and one's elderly relatives.

The other urge that overtakes you when you are around Jean is the same one that compels otherwise refined people to describe their physical afflictions whenever they meet a doctor: the moment you are introduced, you feel the need to tell her about your car. As it happens, I just got a new Volkswagen Passat station wagon, a fact that I of course blurted out, unbidden, the minute Jean and I met. Even though she nodded approvingly and said that *Automobile* had named the Passat one of its 2001 All-Stars, I felt the need to add that I also own a Mazda Miata, just in case she thought the Passat was a little square and that I must therefore be a little square, too—or at least not the sort of person who might, at some point, drive a hundred and sixty-five miles an hour. In fact, Jean is in no way a car snob. Moreover, she hasn't bought a car for herself in years. The last moving object she purchased was a Boles Aero, a nineteen-fifties trailer that she described as looking like a chrome egg; before that, she had an Audi Coupe GT for a while, and a Harley-Davidson Sportster, which she eventually gave away. That said, in the week I spent with her in Detroit and Ann Arbor she drove an Acura MDX, an Audi S4 Avant, and a Mercedes-Benz CLK55 AMG, all of which were demos that had been lent to the magazine by automobile companies for test drives. Being an automotive journalist means never having to own your own vehicle. Being an automotive journalist also means you've probably stacked up so many speeding tickets that you could never afford your own insurance. Jean, who is now forty-seven years old, has been in the business for twenty-one years, so it's been a long time since she's shopped for a car.

Not having to shop for a car runs in Jean's family. Her father, Robert Lienert, was a copy editor at the Detroit *Free Press* who later became the editor of *Automotive News*. He covered the foreign-car industry before anyone else did, predicting the rise of Volkswagen, Volvo, and Fiat; Jean remembers him coming home every night in an exotic loaner. The Lienerts lived in a smidgen of a town called New Baltimore, Michigan—the kind of town, as Jean describes it, where you wouldn't trust anyone who drove a Corvette, so having a father who might drive by in some crazy Scandinavian roadster must have set the Lienert children apart. Jean's mother, on the other hand, didn't drive at all. She was a timid, housebound woman, and her husband dominated her, choosing her appliances and her clothes.

The family, as Jean describes it, was fractious, competitive, uncomfortable.

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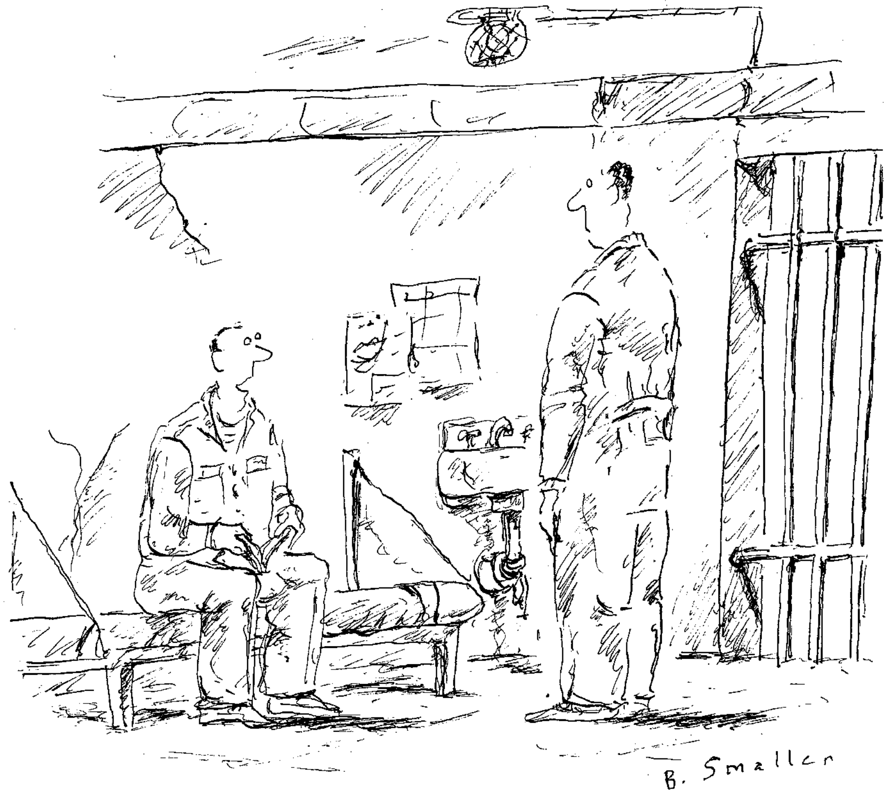
She was perhaps the most disjointed piece of it: the only girl in a family of six children; a strapping kid who was almost six feet tall by the time she entered high school; both a bookworm and a smart-aleck; a rebellious pothead who was so bright that she busted out of high school two years early. At the University of Michigan, she upset all academic expectations by getting below-average grades; she dropped out after two semesters to avoid flunking out. To earn a living, she bought a beater, painted it yellow, and became a cabdriver in Ann Arbor. This proved to be her backdoor entrance into the automobile industry, of which her father was a dean. Not content merely to be a cabdriver, she got herself elected to the board of directors of the cab company, then became the president of the board. The minute she got the top job, she abolished all titles.

The whole time she was backing into the car world, she was also winning blue ribbons at the local country fair for her vegetables and her canned sour cherries. After a few too many ornery passengers, she gave up driving a taxi and devoted herself entirely to canning and pickling and churning. "I did everything by hand," she says. "I grew my own food, I sewed my own clothes, I made my own butter, I sold eggs from my chickens. I did every goddam thing except render lard. I will not render lard." At the time, she was living outside Ann Arbor with her first husband, a jazz musician whom she'd hired to drive second shift in her cab. Their house was two miles from the Chrysler proving grounds. She heard through her brother Paul, who was then the managing editor of *AutoWeek*, that Chrysler was hiring test drivers. "It was a union job, and it paid fifteen thousand dollars a year at a time when that was a lot of money to me," she says. "I had been audited twice because the I.R.S. couldn't believe I made so little money." She didn't get the job, applied again, was passed over again, applied yet again, and was finally hired in 1976. The day before she got the job, she found out that she had cervical cancer, the result of her mother's having taken the anti-miscarriage medication DES. "I thought, Well, shit, I'm not going to lose out on this job. So I had the surgery for the cancer on a Friday and started my job at the proving grounds that Monday."

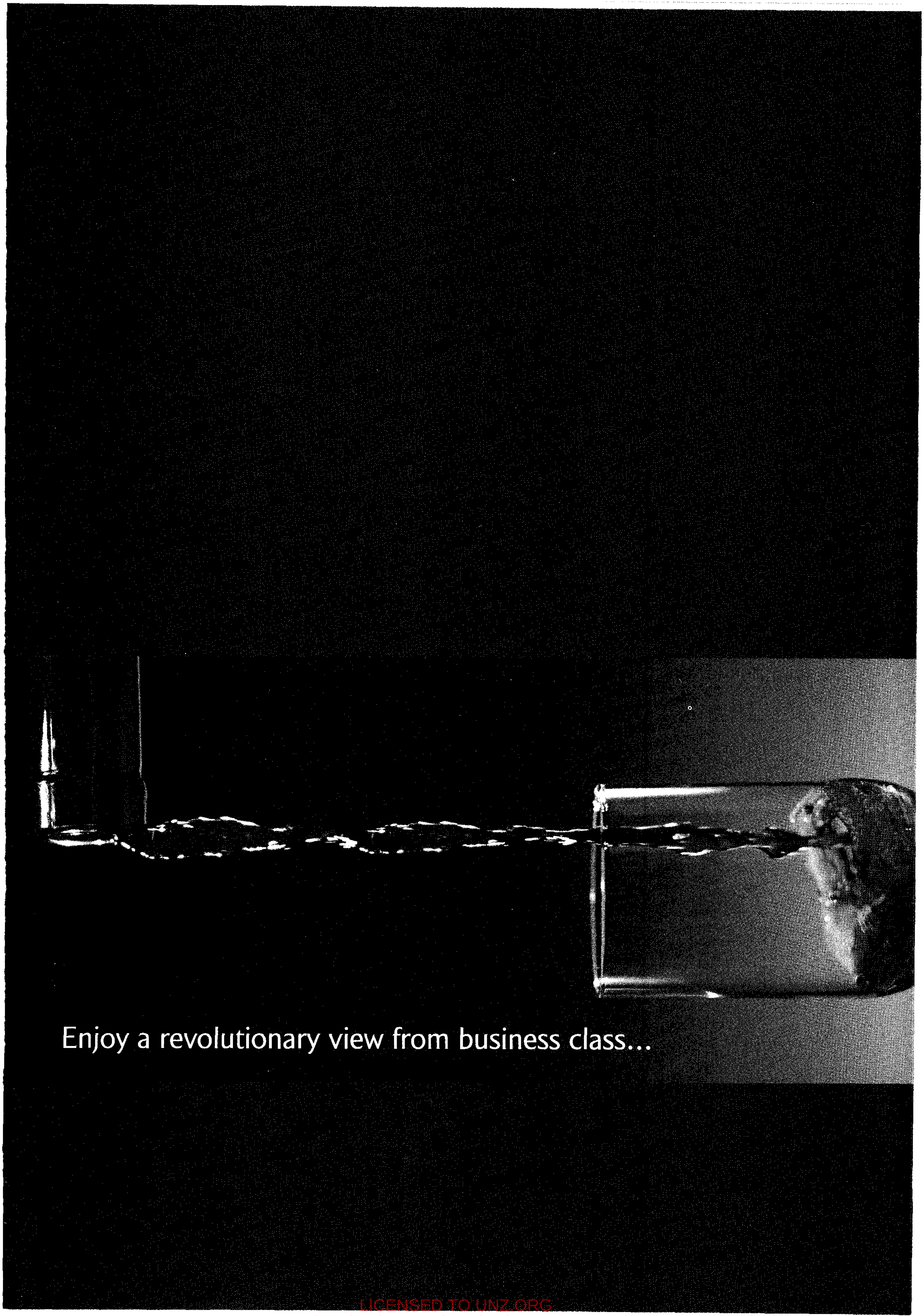
In 1978, Jean became a mechanic at the Chrysler Impact Laboratory, where she swore a lot, learned to weld, and smashed cars into a wall at thirty miles an hour to determine their crashworthiness. When she wasn't wrecking cars, Jean started a union newsletter, *The Chrysler Crew's News*, and proceeded to cause a commotion with it. Her father gave her a lot of advice; among other things, he taught her that you can't talk down to your audience. "I got the readers really involved. I gave a column to the biggest loudmouth complainer in the shop. I would interview all the troublemakers. I wouldn't let anyone who wasn't in the union have a copy, so people in management had to sneak around to get ahold of it. It was really hot. People really wanted that newsletter." Her editorship of *The Chrysler Crew's News* ended when she was laid off during the last big Chrysler downsizing. At her brother's urging, she applied for an associate-editor position at *Car and Driver*.

The magazine *Car and Driver*, which had originally been called *Sports Cars Illustrated*, was founded in 1956; in 1962, right after it was renamed, David E. Davis took over as editor and introduced a tone that was modelled on more literary publications, like Britain's *Car* magazine. Davis had been an amateur racecar driver who quit racing after wiping off most of his face in an accident. Because he wanted to stay connected to the car world, he took a job as an ad salesman at *Road & Track*. Later, he wrote Corvette copy for an advertising agency, where his officemate, Elmore Leonard, encouraged him to develop style and voice in his work. At *Car and Driver*, he hired journalists rather than engineers to write about new vehicles, and he hired women in numbers that were unheard of in the automotive industry.

"My father kept telling me I would never get the job," Jean says. "And I thought, I'm going to get that job. I had spent five years as a cabdriver and then three years as a mechanic—the same wardrobe for both jobs, by the way—and I'd been living out in the country for all those years. For the interview at *Car and Driver*, I bought an India Imports dress and changed into it and felt so



"Don't call yourself a murderer—you're just a person who happened to murder someone."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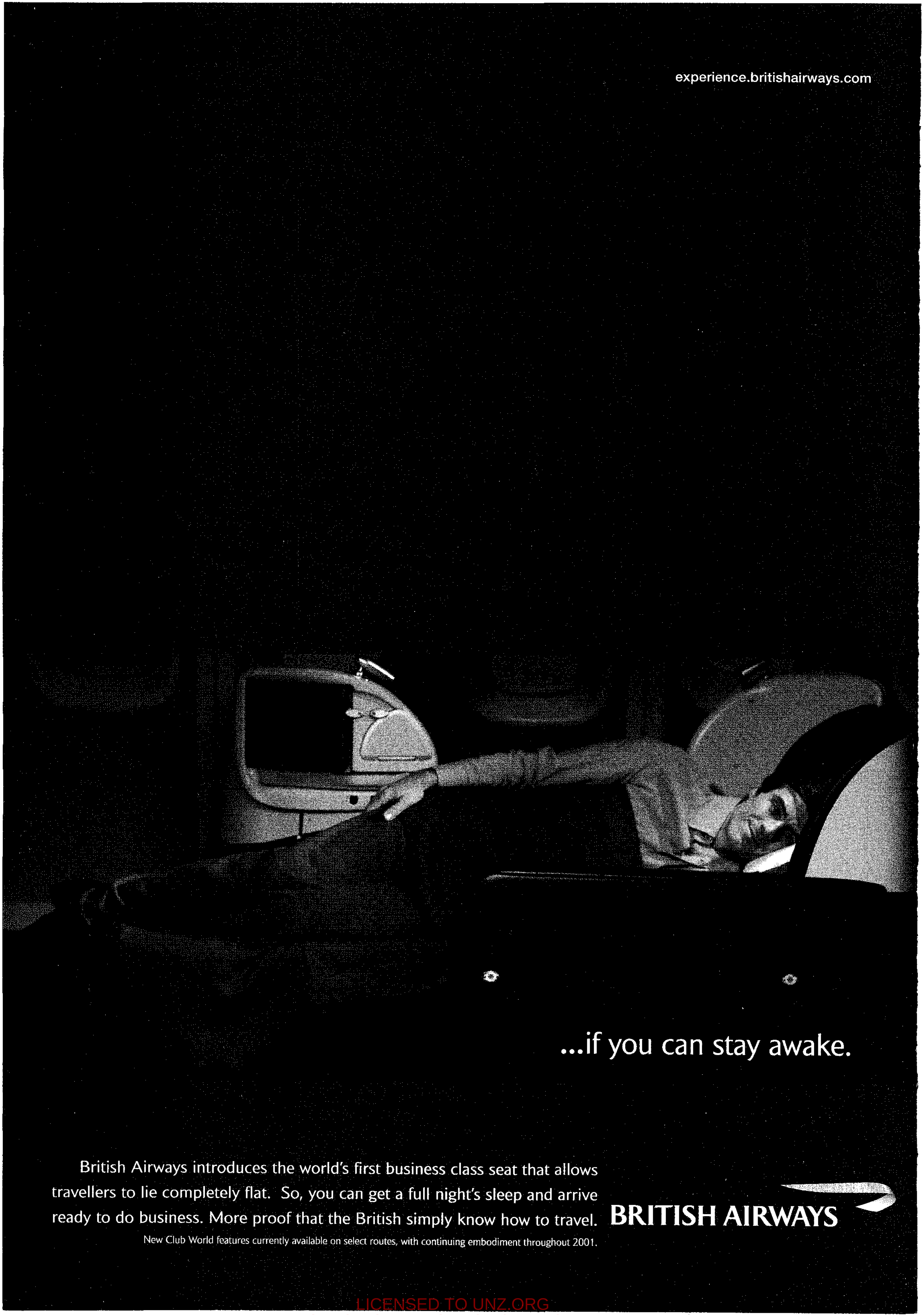
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funny that I went home and put on my bluejeans and put the dress over the bluejeans, and then put on my best feather earrings and a pair of Bass Weejuns. After I got hired, David E. Davis's wife came over to my house and went through my wardrobe and threw most of it out. She dressed me for the next two years. She got me into taupes."

Davis says that an editor at the magazine chided him for hiring someone who seemed wild enough to inflict "permanent damage" on *Car and Driver*, but Davis says it was clear almost from the start that it had been a good decision. "The first thing we assigned her to do was to attend a Bendix press conference," Davis told me recently. "She came back and wrote the piece, and you knew immediately that something was happening. We had a lot of great writers on board, but Jean just changed the nature of the readers' response to the magazine. She was really the star from that day onward."

"I didn't know anything about cars," Jean says. "I could fix them, I could do a brake job, but that's all I knew. Suddenly, I was writing about them. David used to say to me all the time, 'Jean, you are a kick in the head.' I wasn't sure what that meant, but I figured it was good. At that time, I went everywhere at a hundred miles an hour. I was always wondering how fast you could go without crashing." Many of her stories for the magazine grew out of her willingness to try anything and her fascination with speed. In "Off-Road with Walker Evans," about riding with the champion off-road racer, she wrote:

> I'd never seen an off-road race, but I was game. After all, hadn't I used up three four-by-fours in three years of digging in the Michigan woods before I settled down? How much worse could this race be?
>
> There was one small problem. The Sons of Danger neglected to tell Walker that I am a girl. But he hid his consternation well when he found out.
>
> "If you throw up or pee your pants, I ain't stopping," he offered.
>
> "I never throw up," I promised. "It makes me sick."

In a column called "My Best Speeding Tickets," she reminisced about her record as a civilian driver:

> A red Nissan 300ZX twin turbo, screaming across Ohio—Ohio! Am I an idiot?!—in the early hours of the morning just feeling like a goddess in that chariot of fire. (We wept when Nissan took that car away forever.) Ninety minutes at warp speed before I couldn't bear the agony another minute and slowed to sixty. How could I have missed being picked off by the storm troopers of the Ohio State Highway Patrol? Bloody hell! *That* was fine. And then the little, tiny ticket near Chillicothe for going fifty-eight in a fifty-five. Yes, thank you, officer. It won't happen again.

In 1985, frustrated by the owners of the magazine, Davis left *Car and Driver;* soon after, Rupert Murdoch asked him to start a new car magazine. Davis asked Jean to join him, as executive editor. *Automobile* was launched in 1986. "I was only five years removed from being a mechanic at Chrysler," Jean says. "Suddenly, I was an executive editor. I was absolutely terrified."

Jean hoped that her father, however, would be pleased. "My whole life I'd had him sitting on my shoulder; I mean, I was the college dropout, the failure, the big disappointment." So, when the first issue of the magazine came out, she sent him a copy. "He just went through it page by page, criticizing every single thing about it." The next few years were difficult ones; her father died and her marriage fell apart. She began dating a California highway-patrol officer, continued to write her column, "Vile Gossip," and became increasingly involved in managing the magazine. In 1997, she married Tim Jennings, a historic-building renovator and an outdoorsman, whom she had met through friends. The wedding took place in Switzerland, the day before the Geneva Auto Show. Robert Lutz, who was then the president of Chrysler, was the best man; David E. Davis gave her away.

At the end of 1999, Davis was named founder and editor emeritus of the magazine and chief automotive strategist for Primedia, which owns *Automobile*, and was replaced by Jean. Davis says now that he had groomed Jean to be his successor, but that he had been promised a phased takeover and another full year as the magazine's editor. "It was extremely painful," he says now. "Jean and some of the company management engineered my departure. She told a reporter that she didn't want to be an understudy forever." Davis says that now his relationship with Jean is edgy but not estranged. He still writes a column for the magazine, which Jean edits. They shared a limousine to the North American International Auto Show's black-tie event, and Jean mentioned him in all three speeches I heard her give during press-preview week, but their rapport seems fragile. Her self-assuredness in her new role, though, is not. She wrote a wish list when she took over the magazine which reads, "Automobile Magazine Goals: Ultimate authority in the automotive world. Own the world's automotive enthusiasm."

During the week I spent with Jean, the auto show opened for its press preview. Thousands of journalists and industry people were gathered at the Cobo Center, in downtown Detroit, to see the seven hundred or so new-concept and production vehicles on display. Scores of car shows are held every year, but the N.A.I.A.S. is one of the biggest in the world, and it is the most important event of the year for the editor of an automobile magazine. The first day of press week was gusty, bright, and cold as hell. The smokers lurking near the front door of the Cobo Center looked brittle and miserable, and everyone coming in and out of the building swerved and skidded on the glassy sidewalks.

Jean was dressed for the weather. She was wearing a thick red cardigan, wide-legged woollen trousers, and a coat that a friend had made for her out of a Hudson's Bay blanket. She is broad-shouldered and long-limbed, and has a perfect ivory complexion and short dark hair with bouncy curls. Now that she is an editor-in-chief, she wears soberly stylish clothes, but she usually adds something flamboyant to the mix. For instance, she owns thirty pairs of profoundly unusual eyeglasses that she has picked up all over the world; on this particular day, she was wearing a pair with speckled caramel-colored metal frames that she'd found in an airport shop in Germany. Last year, at the N.A.I.A.S. black-tie event, she wore a pink satin fairy-princess ball skirt, a cashmere sweater set beaded with seed pearls, and a feather boa.

In the exhibit hall, the crowd surged and circled up and down the aisles, around and through the displays. Television reporters standing in narrow cones of white light declaimed into their microphones, gesturing toward the cars

Kibbles 'n Bits

"Leave the box."

• •

without shifting their gaze. A jangling melody blasted out of a wall of speakers; on a billboard behind it, the phrase "Bored? Three hours to go for the new Mini" flashed in red neon. A pink Ford Thunderbird revolved on an enormous lazy Susan, and three more pastel Thunderbirds were lined up on an elevated platform like cakes displayed in a bakery. The hollow bodies of dream cars, colored like rare metals or crayons and shaped like breadboxes or shoeboxes or lunar-landing modules, were parked alongside real cars with real engines and real price tags. At the Jeep display, a laser-controlled waterfall formed the phrase "2001 Jeep" in water droplets; across the aisle, stage smoke billowed out from under a mud-splattered Hummer. Silent young men carrying cloths and dusters scurried around the hall, flicking lint off hoods and wiping fingerprints off door handles.

We were in the middle of a conversation about dogs as we walked in. "I'm a big dog person," Jean was saying. "But, you know, I really like wiener dogs. They're such little bastards, so full of piss—" She ground to a halt in front of the Land Rover display and threw her arms around a mild-looking guy in a business suit who was the chairman and C.E.O. of Land Rover. "Oh, my God in Heaven," she declared. "It's the goddam king of England!" The mild-looking guy beamed. "How the hell are you?" Jean asked him.

A small man in tweeds walking past the booth noticed her and headed over. He designs cars for Jaguar. "Jeannie!" he hollered.

"God damn!" she said enthusiastically, giving him a kiss.

"Did you see the Forty-Nine?" he asked, referring to a new Ford concept car.

She drew her breath in sharply and said, "I could just hump that car, it's so beautiful." He asked her about another concept car. "That's an ugly-ass car," she said, shaking her head. "Didja ever see anything quite that ugly? I was lying in bed last night just worrying, worrying, worrying about that car, trying to understand it." While they were talking, Jean's ex-husband walked by without stopping. Then Jean's brother Paul and his wife, Anita, who write a car-review column for the Detroit *News* called "He Drove, She Drove," stopped to talk for a while; then the president of Porsche paused to discuss his plans to go fishing with Jean's husband, Tim; then came Jacques Nasser, the president and C.E.O. of Ford, and Chris Bangle, who designs BMWs, and three young men, former assistants of Jean's, whom she had nicknamed Spike, Duke, and Sluggo; then the top management of Primedia. She kissed so many automotive executives that she had to reapply her lipstick three or four times. "Did you hear about the first time she and I went on a sales call together?" John Loughlin, a Primedia executive, asked me. "We go in to meet the executive, and Jean just walks up to him and pinches his behind. I almost died."

"When I first got into this business, I was very, very shocking," Jean explained. "I think they're used to me now." If she is no longer quite as shocking as she once was, her opinions still resonate. In the fall of 1997, Jean had told a Volkswagen executive that "the cup holders in Volkswagens suck." Soon after, Volkswagen redesigned its cup holders. During one turn around the exhibit hall, we ran into the head of Volkswagen North America, an antic German named Gerd Klauss. "Jeannie, I swear," he bellowed, after giving her a big hug, "no more sucking cup holders!"

At the N.A.I.A.S. eleven years ago, when Jean was still what Davis called "the 'Perils of Pauline' editor" at *Automobile*, Jean posed as one of those bosomy automotive experts who loll around the displays stroking fenders and tail-lights; her story about the experience was called "Do You Come with the Car, Honey?" Now, as the head of one of the four major magazines covering the industry, she has more serious responsibilities: on Friday night at the show, she presented the Automobile of the Year award to Ron Zarrella, of General Motors, for the Corvette Z06, giving a speech that was cheeky but politic, full of accolades for an industry that has had a difficult year—one in which the tires of Ford Explorers exploded and the Oldsmobile division of General Motors closed forever. Anyone who knew her as a union gadfly would have been amazed to see her there, the ultimate insider, but such contradictions are a constant in Jean's life.

Jean and Tim live in a small peach-colored house across from a bird sanctuary and a defunct nursery out in the country, thirty-five miles from Ann

Arbor. The nearby hamlet is little more than a handful of stores, a truck dealership, and a speed trap. When Jean moved here twenty years ago, it was dead quiet. Ann Arbor is spreading in this direction these days, and a subdivision is now bubbling up behind her property; she says that she and Tim plan to move before they can see any new houses. Her ultimate ambition is to end up in a remote corner of northern Michigan and go fly-fishing all day—and yet she was exulting because she had just found out that *Automobile* had passed the hundred-thousand mark in newsstand sales. She says that there was a time in her life when she felt so mixed up about being the country girl who churned her own butter, the mechanic who would drink and swear with the crew, and the successful magazine writer that she would come home every night and cry. Now it makes more sense to her, and she has integrated the disparate pieces of her life into something that feels whole. On the last morning of the press-preview week, she hosted a lavish *Automobile* breakfast at the Detroit Institute of Arts for the heads of the automobile industry, most of whom she counts as friends. As soon as the breakfast was over, we got into a six-speed Audi and shot out to her house, went snowshoeing, and then packed for the drive to Louisiana. After duck hunting, Jean planned to return to Ann Arbor briefly, then leave for Italy to test-drive an Infiniti Q45 between Rome and Florence.

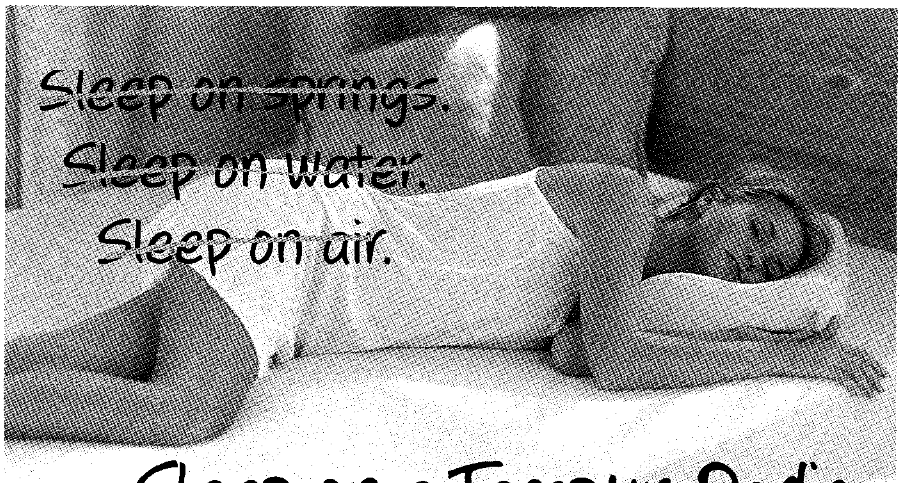
At dawn the next day, Jean was riding shotgun and Dr. Leadfoot was at the wheel. Rain was peppering the windshield and then balling up and rolling away; the wet road hissed under the tires. A blue sedan crossed into our lane and then puttered along sluggishly.

"This guy sucks," the doctor said. "What do you suggest I do?"

"Feel sorry for yourself," Jean said. "That's my advice. That's my slogan. If you have a shitty time, no one cares, so you might as well have a good time."

"That's unfortunate," the doctor said. "I might have to run him over."

Jean looked at her and started to laugh. "O.K., then," she said. "Get out the battering ram." ♦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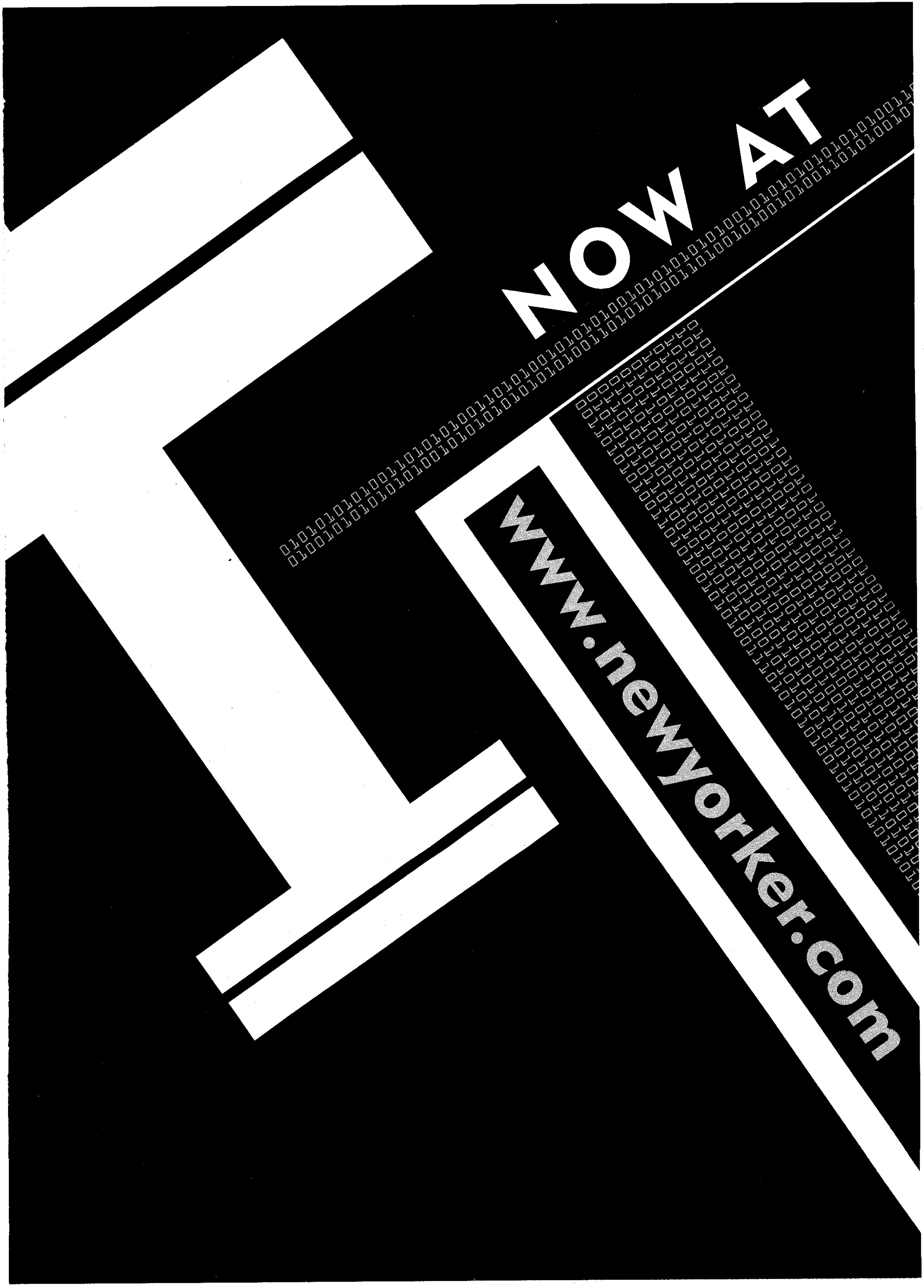
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PROFILES

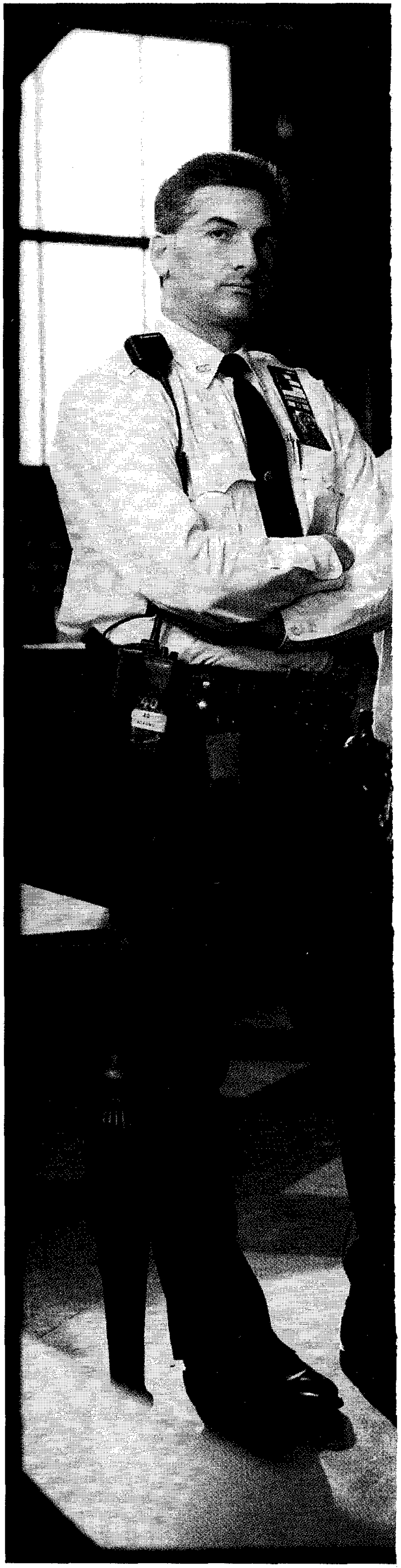
THE CRIME LOVER

Wise guys, street thugs, and gangsta rappers all know the man to call in the Bronx.

BY PHILIP GOUREVITCH

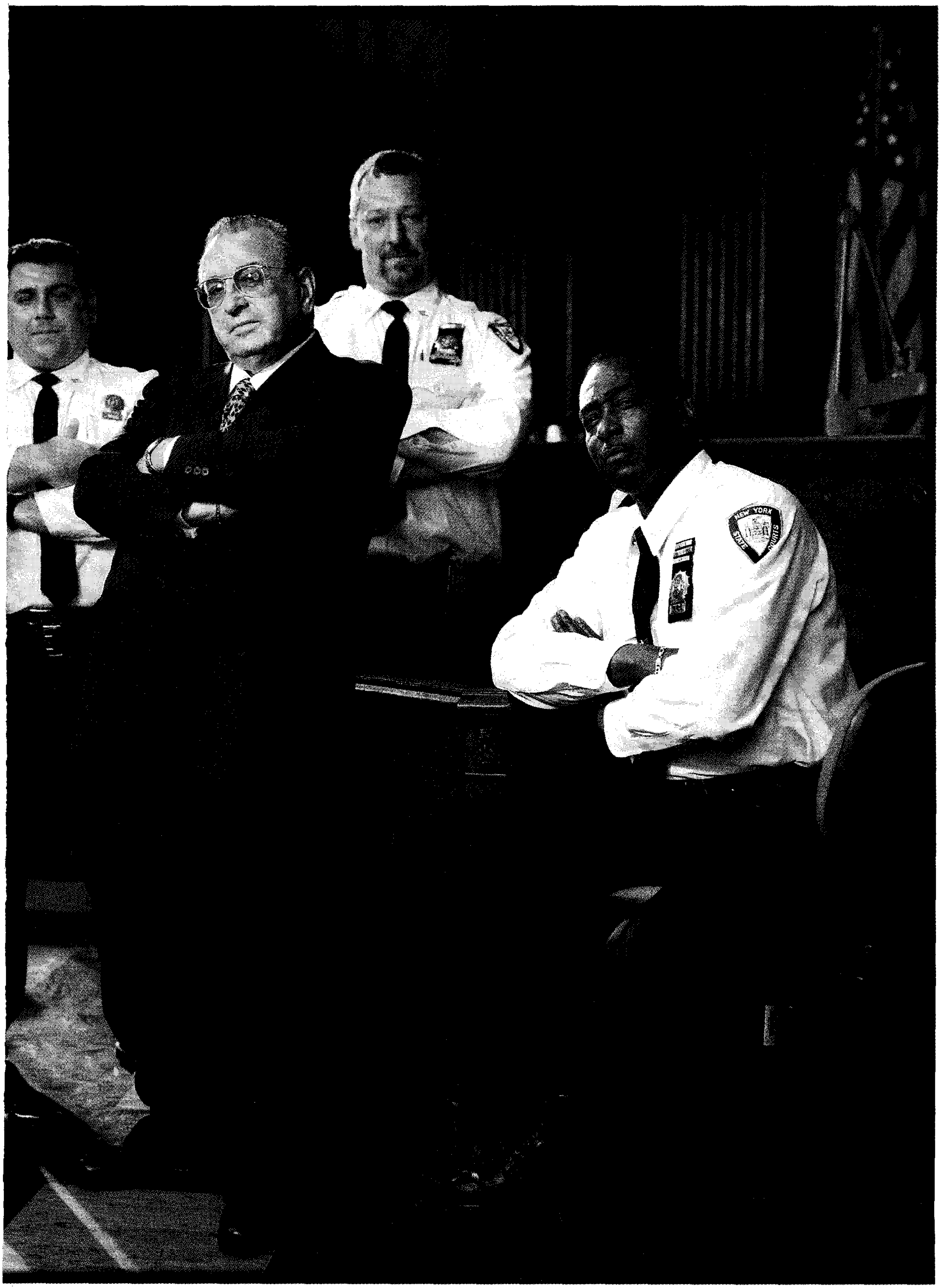
In a fairly typical month last December, between a Thanksgiving trip to Puerto Rico and a New Year's break in Aruba, Murray Richman appeared in more than a dozen courtrooms in the Bronx, Manhattan, and Westchester County, to fight charges of murder, manslaughter, attempted murder, assault with a deadly weapon, unlawful imprisonment, gun possession, grand larceny, racketeering, narcotics, official misconduct, numbers running, bribery, extortion, and fraud—and as I followed him on his rounds he said, "Isn't this fun? This is fun. This is the action. You keep moving, do more than one thing in a day, it's the best." Richman is one of New York City's busiest criminal-defense lawyers, and one of its most expensive. ("Reasonable doubt," he likes to say, "begins with the payment of a reasonable fee.") The first time I spoke with him, a little more than a year ago, he was on his car phone, and the first thing he said was "I'm on trial. I'm always on trial. That's my life story: on trial." I asked what he was on trial for this time. "Murder," he said, then, after a beat, "I love murder—always one less witness to worry about." Richman claims that he approaches each new case with the feeling "It's not the client on trial, but you," and he is known in the city's courthouses as much for wooing juries with comic jibes and irreverent asides as for wowing them with unforgivingly needling cross-examinations. "A laughing jury is not a convicting jury," he says, although he acknowledges that he has been proved wrong: "Loved you, hated your client," a laughing juror once told him after returning a guilty verdict. Still, it seemed tactless for a murderer's lawyer to be joking about the murder victim as evidence disposed of. Richman, however, has never let tact get in the way of beating a rap, and a few days after our phone conversation, when I went up to the Bronx, to a drab-looking three-story brick building on Williamsbridge Road where he has his law offices, I learned that although he was being funny about his fondness for murder cases, he wasn't really kidding. "Murder's my favorite," he said. "Murder's my thing. I do a lot of murder," and he explained that the attraction of a murder case is precisely that it is a case of "assault without a witness"—or, at least, the key witness—and that means, "It's defendable."

Then again, Richman has yet to discover a type of crime that he doesn't consider defendable. He figures that since he was admitted to the bar, in 1964, he has spent at least half his life in court, and enough of the rest of his days in jail, visiting clients, to have earned a free ride for time served if, say, he should ever decide to rob a bank. At sixty-three, he goes about his business as if his age made him the energetic equivalent of three twenty-one-year-olds, shrugging off reports of the city's steadily declining crime rate with the boast "I've never had a bad year." Along the way, he has represented made men from all five of the city's top Mafia families (Bonanno, Colombo, Gambino, Genovese, and Lucchese), a host of cops, judges, state senators, and other public officials (Raymond Donovan, the former Secretary of Labor under Ronald Reagan, and Paul Adler, the former chairman of the Rockland County Democratic Party and a fund-raiser for Hillary Clinton), as well as a number of popular entertainers (the comedian D. L. Hughley, the actor Burt Young, and the rap-music stars DMX and Jay-Z). Such high-profile clients have helped make



PHOTOGRAPH BY MARTIN SCHOELLER

Murray Richman, with officers of the court. "My version of truth and justice may be different from yours and somewhat askew. . . . But I'm a believer in the system."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him, true to his name, a rich man, and something of a celebrity in his own right. But the bulk of his business still comes as it always has, through word-of-mouth referrals among men and women with a propensity for getting arrested for felonies in the Bronx, where Richman's peculiar mix of scrappy self-confidence and sympathy—"Fuck it," "I don't care what you did," "That's for the jury to decide," "It's beatable," "I'll take care of it"—long ago earned him the street name Don't Worry Murray.

One of Richman's stock gags, when he's addressing a jury, is to open with the words "I'll keep it short—no, make that brief, I'm already short." "Totally corny," he told me, "but it works every time. The jury cracks up." It works, of course, because it's true: he's short, and with the years he has also grown wide, but his feet, which are small, carry him with a lightness that recalls a trimmer form; he is forever popping up on tiptoes, or spinning, or making little kicks, as if someone had just shouted, "Let's cha-cha!" His voice, too—throaty and urgent—bounces and struts with a Bronx street-corner jauntiness; and his face, which is large and creased and full of appetite, is equally nimble and restless. In a grand-larceny case, a few months back, I watched him working over a prosecution witness who presented himself as meek and fragile and easily intimidated. Wasn't it true, Richman inquired, that, in fact, the witness was known to friends and family by the nickname Macho? With that, he turned away while the witness took the bait and answered combatively, asking Richman if he had any nicknames. Richman wheeled back toward the stand, barking, "I ask the questions here!" then, flashing a wicked grin, he added in sugary tones, "Some people call me Honey." The prosecutor moaned, "Objection," and the judge let out an amused snort and said, "Sustained. I don't think that anyone here would call you that."

Richman's insouciant, swashbuckling approach to big-time crime as big-time fun is hardly limited to the courtroom. He frequently describes murderers as "sweet," and gangsters as "old friends," and he has a habit of socializing with the hardest-boiled of the underworld élite which has won him the enduring contempt of a number of the city's prosecutors, who speak of him, on strict conditions of anonymity, as indecently—if not illegally—intimate with his clients. "It's hard to believe that he doesn't know a lot more than he would have everyone believe about what some of his clients are up to," one such critic told me, adding, "As entertaining as he may be, 'trustworthy' is not a word that would come to my mind in relation to Murray." Richman dismisses such insinuations as pure calumny. As he sees it, his excellent connections in criminal circles are merely a measure of his professional success. To be sure, he has on occasion been obliged to step down from racketeering cases because he has been too closely associated with too many of the defendants and witnesses. Steven Cohen, a former head of the gangs unit for the United States Attorney's office in Manhattan, supervised the prosecution in one such case a few years ago. The judge disqualified Richman, ruling that he appeared to have served as "house counsel" to a drug-dealing operation called the Bryant Boys, and Cohen was impressed by Richman's response. "Most lawyers would be hurt, insulted, bruised," he said. "Murray walked out of there with me, saying, 'Hey, what do you expect?'

NAT KRELL THEATRICAL AGENT
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WEBER

"I'm sorry, but the name Parker Posey is already taken."

"The fact is, Murray remains a member of good standing in the bar, he's very much in demand, he's very good at what he does, and people who don't like the way he does it—as theatre, with lots of shtick—have a very narrow conception of what it is to be a trial lawyer," Cohen told me. "The problem is a lot of young prosecutors can't appreciate the kind of art form that is Murray Richman, and I'm sure it offends a lot of people. But guys like Murray are going the way of a decent corned-beef sandwich in this city."

On most days this winter, Richman can be found on the seventh floor of the State Supreme Court building at 111 Centre Street, in lower Manhattan, where he is defending Jamal Barrow, a boyish-looking twenty-two-year-old with jewel-encrusted teeth, who is better known as the rap star Shyne, and who was charged with attempted murder last year after allegedly firing a 9-mm. semi-automatic handgun and wounding three people in a crowded midtown nightclub. The incident was made famous by the fact that Shyne is a protégé of the hip-hop impresario Sean (Puff Daddy) Combs, who was at the club at the time, and is charged in the same case with the illegal possession of a handgun, which was found in his car after he fled the scene with his superstar girlfriend, Jennifer Lopez. The celebrity of the defendants and their lawyers—Combs is represented by Benjamin Brafman and Johnnie Cochran—emboldened the

New York *Post*, on January 29th, the morning of opening arguments, to dub the proceedings "the trial of the year." The public benches of the courtroom were filled to capacity, and a lengthy queue of reporters and supporters of the accused were stranded in the hallway, while the prosecutor, Assistant District Attorney Matthew Bogdanos, spent an hour and a half laying out his account of the events surrounding the shootings. When Richman's turn came to address the jury, he paced briskly before them in a charcoal suit with a flaming-red pocket square. Bogdanos had described Shyne pulling a gun, aiming at somebody, firing three times, tucking the gun into his waistband, and racing out the door, directly into the arms of two policemen, but Richman declared, "If you believe everything he says, you will believe buffaloes have wings, and if buffaloes have wings, ladies and gentlemen, I better walk around with an umbrella."

Then Richman got physical. "The incident happened in such a quick fashion"—he jiggled on his feet, with his hands bouncing beside him—"in such a melee"—his head scrunched into his shoulders, and snapped from side to side—"the whole thing may have been over in less than one minute"—he moved faster, creating a sense of bewildered commotion—"with fifty people within an area roughly the size of this jury box"—he kept his feet planted, as his torso writhed in an imagined crush of bodies—"fifty people turning, rushing, pushing, everybody sees something different"—he rolled his head, eyes wide, but seemingly blind—"one person sees the gun fired in the air"—he flung a hand overhead—"one saw it down"—he crooked his elbow, aiming at his foot—"this other person got the gun, this person got the gun, everybody got the gun"—he flung both hands about, thumbs cocked, forefingers pointing, this way, that way, a blur of confusion—"guns were thrown around, guns were picked up, guns were all over the place." Richman composed himself abruptly, then went on sowing doubt with an air of passionate conviction for a while, building to a new crescendo of outrage, before catching himself again, and bowing his head. "I'm sorry," he said. "I get emotional. I don't mean to. I really wanted to do this very calmly. I wanted to impress you, to control my temper. I have to trust in you folks."

The jurors sat poker-faced throughout this performance, but Richman assured me that it had been a great success. "When it comes to blowing smoke and obfuscating, I'm a master," he told me. He also said, "Court's a playground for me. It's an opportunity to show off, and I'm a showoff, you know."

Despite the frenetic pace of his daily calendar, a great part of Richman's working life is spent idling, waiting out the inevitable delays in court, or in jail, for something that's supposed to happen, or someone who's supposed to appear, and a few years ago it occurred to him that he might put this time to use by writing about his career. Before long, he had produced a manuscript of about fifty thousand words, titled "Reduced to the Absurd: My Life in the Criminal Justice System." As literature, it is a decidedly unpolished self-celebration, yet its roughness only adds to its fascination. For, in recounting the stories of his courtroom successes and setbacks, Richman repeatedly returns to what he calls the question most frequently asked of criminal-defense lawyers—How can you defend a man you know to be guilty?—and, in responding that it's not his job to judge his clients, Richman sometimes seems to have reasonable doubts himself. Prosecutors, he says, may believe they are doing "God's work." He does not enjoy such faith. But he does maintain that, in defending the constitutional rights of even the most heinous criminals, he is standing up for everyone—and always, ultimately, defending himself.

"That's really how I feel most of the time, but there are times I don't think it works for me, or even for society," Richman writes in his manuscript, and goes on to tell about a client from the early eighties, named William Normile, a "wanna-be" mafioso, who was known along Arthur Avenue, in the Little Italy neighborhood of the Bronx, as Billy No Brains, and who "lived up to his nickname." Billy was "a big burly kid in his early twenties, always with a smile" and "free with his hands," and when a friend of his got ripped off by one of the prostitutes who worked the streets near the Hunts Point markets, performing oral sex in customers' cars for fifteen dollars a trick, Billy decided "to get even." One night, he drove to Hunts Point, picked out a streetwalker at random, and when she got to work on him he began to drive off. The woman leaped out of the car, so Billy picked up another one. "The next day," Richman writes, "that hooker was found beaten to death, apparently with a baseball bat, the wanna-bes' weapon of choice." The police arrested Billy after learning that he had been bragging about the murder to a friend, and the key witness in the case was the first prostitute Billy had picked up. Richman notes that in her statement to the police she had said the person who tried to abduct her and then abducted the murdered woman was uncircumcised. In court, Richman cross-examined the woman, establishing that she had been working the streets seven days a week for thirteen years, since she was fourteen, turning ten to fifteen tricks a night.

"That's an awful lot of penises you've seen . . . over sixty thousand," he said.

"Yes," she said.

"Can you tell the difference between a circumcised penis and one that's not circumcised?"

"Sure."

And, Richman asked, "you say the man who picked up the deceased had an uncircumcised penis, didn't you?"

"Yes, I did."

Later in the trial, when the prosecution brought in the medical examiner as a witness to testify to the method of the murdered woman's death, Richman cross-examined him, and established that over the years he had examined the corpses of more than four thousand men. Then, with the judge's permission, he asked the doctor to step into the robing room and examine his client. The doctor did so, and testified that Billy was indeed circumcised. "The jury took no time in acquitting," Richman writes, adding, "I felt great." He never suggests that he imagined Billy No Brains was innocent; rather, he says, "I had won by preparation and using the evidence I had gotten from the authorities, as required by law."

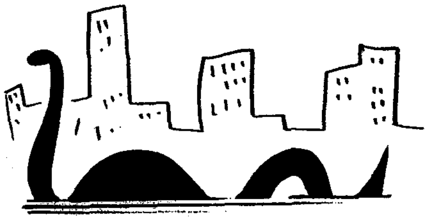
Less than two years later, in Florida, Billy stabbed a neighbor forty-one times, and was sentenced to life in prison for murder. He was released after six and a half years because of an administrative error, and within two years he had murdered his girlfriend, and, Richman writes, "finally did the right thing—he killed himself as well." After that, Richman says, "I was troubled, and walked around in a depressed state for a long time. I could not help thinking that had I lost that case years ago, three people would be alive today: that guy in Florida, Billy's girlfriend . . . and probably Billy himself."

Richman soon recovered his equilibrium. "If I defended only innocent people I would go hungry," he writes a bit later, and, besides, "I generally do not know as a certainty that the person charged has committed the crime charged." Or, as he put it to me at our first meeting, "I'll be candid with you. I've always been very callous. People have asked me, 'How can you represent people like this?' I hate that question. It's obviously an ignorant person who asks me that question. Because it's an obligation, it's my duty, and I do believe in this Constitution, and I really buy that shit. I really buy the whole bag of works. I believe in truth, I believe in justice, and I believe that truth and justice will inevitably prevail. My version of truth and justice may be somewhat different from yours and somewhat askew. I'm not going to deny that. But I'm a believer in the system." Richman was optimistic about the murder case he was trying at the time. "This is the second time I defended the guy for a murder," he said. "He won the first one. That's why he came back. That's the best—repeat business."

In his youth, Richman's ambition was to go into politics, and, watching him move through the city's courthouses, one might easily imagine that he was running for office. He seems to know and be known by nearly everyone, swapping greetings, handshakes, backslaps, or embraces with the security officers who wave him past the metal detectors, with the court officers and stenographers, with the lawyers milling in the hallways, and, of course, with the judges. Richman has a prodigious memory for all their names, what cases they're working on, how their health is, how their spouses are, which sports teams they support. The "human touch," as he calls it, comes naturally, but Richman *is* constantly campaigning. "The effectiveness of a lawyer is that he dominates his turf," he told me, and that means knowing who's who in the system and how to get through to them, "which buttons are pushed, which judges to see—nothing wrong, just knowing what the attitude of the other person is going to be." After all, he told me, time and again, "All law is local," and although he has lived since 1969 in a spacious but modest ranch house in suburban Rockland County, and also keeps an apartment in Manhattan, his true home remains the Bronx, where he grew up and has always had his offices.

In 1937, when Richman was born, his family lived on Vyse Avenue and 174th Street, in a neighborhood that he recalled, as we drove through it one afternoon, as "predominantly Jewish, but downscale—a lot of the types of Jews that go gambling, you know, knockabout Jews." Murray was the second of three sons, and his father, a Bessarabian-born housepainter, soon moved the family about a mile away to a building at the edge of Crotona Park, in the Morrisania section, the core of the South Bronx. That building still stands, but most of the surrounding neighborhood was burned and stripped to the bones by looters and arsonists in the sixties and seventies. The wreckage has since been levelled and replaced with an improbable scattering of small, suburban-style homes. Morrisania, however, remains a place of desolation, utterly at odds with Richman's memories of bustling streets, stickball, swimming at the ten-cent pool, walking to elementary school, Hebrew school, and the public library, and adolescent courtships on public benches where "everyone hung out," singing doo-wop, and where, in 1955, while sneaking a cigarette on Yom Kippur, he met a fourteen-year-old girl named Andrea Shasun (who, as he recalls, was then starring in a production of "The King and I" alongside a neighborhood boy named Al Pacino); he married her seven years later.

After graduating from Morris High, where Colin Powell was in the class ahead, Richman became a regular at the neighborhood Democratic Club, whose power brokers helped him land a series of jobs as a social worker, and he was soon steering youthful offenders through the criminal-justice system. By his own account, he was an idealistic liberal when he began hanging around the courts. He was fascinated by the human dramas of the cases he watched, and by the rhetorical strategies and tactics with which lawyers stage-managed them, and when he began attending New York Law School at night he felt that he was responding to an "almost priestly calling." The law, he writes, "drew me to her, and I in turn drew a certain sweetness from the law. It satisfied. It possessed for me a certain symmetry and beauty that nothing else heretofore had." At the same time, in his social work with Hispanic youth gangs, he says, "I learned that not all people were raised like me, yet they were no better or worse for it. I learned human beings do things that other human beings do not understand. I learned some people hurt others and yet do not see themselves as hurters; that infliction of pain may indeed be a cry that pain is being inflicted on them." And in the combination of these discoveries—the worlds of the law and of misery and vice—Richman also saw a market.



As soon as he was admitted to the bar, he went into private practice. "Since no one came to me, I went to them," he writes. "I opened an office in the rear of a travel agency in an area which would be called today a high-crime area"—a mostly Latino district on Wilkins Avenue. With his office manager, Renie Arias, a Puerto Rican woman who continues to work at his side today, he would make the rounds of the neighborhood's restaurants, its weddings and wakes, dealing out calling cards and saying, "Talk to me," "Listen to me," "Don't worry," "I'll take care of it." Arias was young, pretty, and quick-witted, and she shared Richman's judge-not fascination with people in trouble. Trolling the barrio for clients with Arias, Richman drew no great distinction between working and hanging out, and as he absorbed the distrust of the authorities which was rampant, and often well founded, in the minority communities, he came to think of himself as fighting "the people's fight" by taking the small-time drug and gambling cases that

"Kevin is one of those fabulously charming young right-wing sociopaths you've been reading about."

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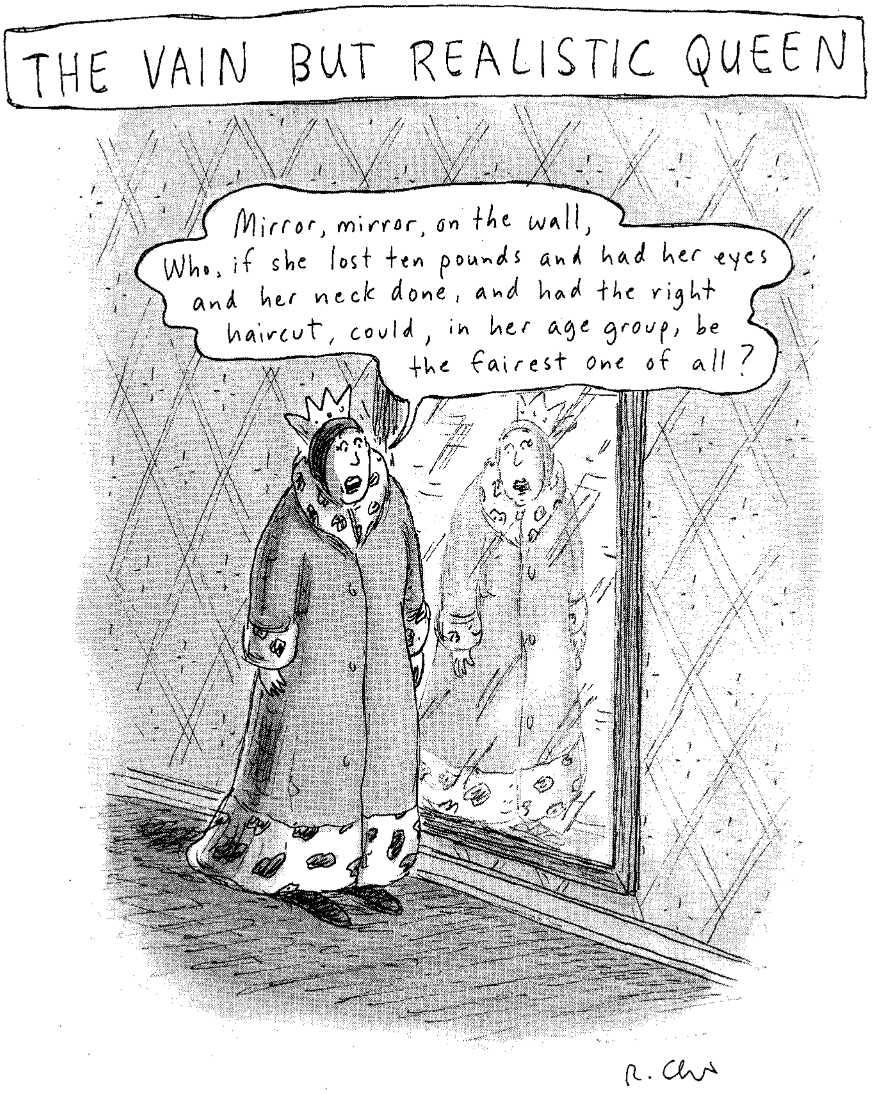
were then the mainstay of his practice.

But Richman quickly grew tired of "chasing nickels and dimes" and decided that if he was to make his fortune in criminal law he needed to connect with the Mafia. Once again, he and Arias went where the customers were, "raising the flag" on Arthur Avenue. "We'd go to various spots on a Friday night, generate business," he told me. "Walk in, people would know you, 'Hey, Murray,' 'Hi, Murray,' and a guy would come over and say, 'I got pinched, I got a little problem.' We'd speak about the problem, take his papers, tell him to come see me at the office, and you'd walk out on any given Friday with ten new cases." The only trick was not to swallow the drinks the wise guys bought him. "You raise the glass, put it to your lip, and put it down," Richman said. "Otherwise you're useless."

Before long, Richman was making himself useful to jewelled men with juicy girlfriends and fat rolls of money, "who committed crime not so much in the heat of passion or need, but . . . on a day-in-and-day-out basis, instead of going off to the office to earn their keep: highjackings, professional burglary of businesses, high-stakes robbery, illegal card games or other gambling activities, or murders that were just business, nothing personal." And, he writes, "I must admit I loved the attention and was enamored with the respect that came with it. . . . The book 'The Godfather' had just come out and the mob was in vogue. Movie stars posed with hoods, and here I was representing them." At first, Richman was also impressed with the code of honor that mobsters professed to uphold. But he soon realized that most were not as "standup" or as smart as they claimed, and that, while they liked to brag about having expensive lawyers, they never mentioned how little they paid. Richman's solution was to triple his fees. After all, he explains, "I'd only receive one third of it anyway," and "my client, who perceived he was 'beating me' for the rest, would be thrilled because he got a 'score,' and then he would go around boasting how much his 'Jew lawyer' was charging him."

So much for "the people's fight." By 1969, Richman was representing enough wise guys that *Reader's Digest* dubbed him a Mafia mouthpiece. He says that he considered suing the magazine, but he also enjoyed his "celebrity status." And he was thrilled, a year later, when he beat an arson rap for a client who was an affiliate of Carmine (Mr. Gribbs) Tramunti, the head of the Lucchese crime family. Tramunti


THE VAIN BUT REALISTIC QUEEN
Mirror, mirror, on the wall, Who, if she lost ten pounds and had her eyes and her neck done, and had the right haircut, could, in her age group, be the fairest one of all?

himself appeared at the "mobbed-up" victory celebration afterward, and greeted Richman with a kiss on the cheek—a very bankable "seal of approval":

> That night was my night. We ate, drank, danced and had a fine old time. At two in the morning I was presented with a diamond watch with a peau de soie band, gift-wrapped. Now that impressed me. I must have had too much to drink, for I naively asked him, "Gee, Carmine, how did you get a jewelry store to open so late at night?"
>
> From there we went to another connected joint, the Golden Hour. As we entered with Carmine, the band struck up the theme from The Godfather . . . and the crowd parted for us like God parted the Red Sea for my ancestors.

To be sure, the Mafia lost some of its enchantment for Richman in the summer of 1972, when he was handling a multidefendant narcotics case—"at that time, the biggest Mafia thing on the East Coast"—involving Joey LaCosa, JoJo Manfredi, and his nephews Philip J. and Philip D. Manfredi, of the Gambino crime family. One night, after a meeting for the defendants and their lawyers at Richman's home, the two Philips' bodies were found back in the Bronx, in Clasons Point. "After that, my wife said no more meetings at the house," he told me. "She was right, I was wrong." In fact, Richman writes, "In the more than thirty-six years I've been playing in the courthouse, I've known more than fifty people who have been killed for business reasons," and he offers up a memorial list of these fallen clients and acquaintances, including Mike Salerno (a suspected Mob capo, found in the trunk of his daughter's Jaguar with a gunshot wound to his chest and a stab wound in the neck), and Dominick (Big Trin) Trinchera (shotgunned, and dismembered, along with Alphonse (Sonny Red) Indelicato, in a Bonanno crime-family feud, as depicted in the movie "Donnie Brasco").

Richman says that he has never felt personally afraid of any of his clients, but he uses words like "frightened" and "terrified" to describe his response to the way that government informers began to tear apart the Mafia, as he knew it, after the passage, in 1970, of the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act, or RICO. On October 4, 1973, Carmine Tramunti and dozens of associates were indicted in the first massive federal narcotics-conspiracy case in New York. Richman represented Tramunti and several others at the arraignment, but the Lucchese godfather decided that he wanted a more experienced lawyer for the trial, and Richman was "given" a lesser defendant, Benjamin Tolopka. The trial lasted seven weeks; the prosecution relied heavily on an informer's testimony; the jury deliberated for five days; and the only defendant who was not found guilty was Tolopka. Tramunti later died in jail. "I saw what the government could do . . . and it scared the shit out of me," Richman writes.

"Trust the authorities?" he said to me at one point. "Not at all." Then he went further: "Do I see a difference between the authorities and gangsters? Yeah, the gangsters are more compassionate." It wasn't clear if Richman entirely believed this; it seemed that he wanted to, but at the same time he complained, "The criminals you have today have no color." Even within the Mafia, "a lot of these guys today, I can't understand—how the fuck did they get their button?

"Years ago," he told me, "I made a comment to another lawyer, who had said, 'What happened to all the wise guys?' I said to him, 'We're the wise guys. We bought into all that shit. We bought the *omertà*, and all the other stuff, and tried to emulate that bullshit. And it's all bullshit. Never was anything. We're the ones that kept the standard. We kept the standard going as lawyers.' "

Every few minutes during my time with Richman at his office, our conversation was interrupted by a phone call, or by a colleague or a client who strolled in to discuss a case or swap gossip. It wasn't unusual for these breaks to last longer than the patches of conversation we squeezed in between them, and although Richman occasionally signalled for me to turn off my tape recorder, for the most part he seemed pleased, even eager, for me to witness and record the antic theatricality of his peculiar moral universe.

(Enter Stacey, Richman's elder daughter, an attorney who works with him as one of eleven young associates at his office, and Renie Arias, his longtime office manager.)

RICHMAN: What's the charge?

STACEY: It's rape.

RICHMAN: Fine. Call and find how much money is gonna be in the case—if it's a sure thing or not.

RENIE: What happened is, he was in the room with the girl at her parents' house. He jumped out the window and broke his legs. He's in the hospital.

STACEY: He jumped out from the third floor.

RENIE: But that's not what the lawsuit is—he's got another pending lawsuit.

STACEY: Because the father tried to shoot him.

(Enter Renie, with a phone message about a narcotics case.)

RICHMAN: Two Hasidic kids got arrested for Ecstasy, in France. . . . Kids from Brooklyn. Seventy-eight thousand pills. Importation. They brought it—they were just couriers—from Holland to France to New York. At the airport they got arrested. . . . A woman and a man. Twenty-one-year-old girl and a twenty-one-year-old boy. Newlyweds.

(Enter Marco, an elderly Italian-American client, who is under house arrest and required to wear an electronic tracking bracelet on his ankle. A few months earlier, his foot swelled up, he went to the hospital, and the doctors took the bracelet off. Now his probation officer says those months won't count against his sentence.)

RICHMAN: Marco, go home, get outta here. . . . I'll get you credit for the time. . . . As sick as you are, you came in? What are you, crazy?

MARCO: Aw, I got nervous. It's two months, two and a half months. My damn life won't last two and a half months.

RICHMAN: Marco, as long as I've known you, you haven't got that life to live. Remember thirty years ago? Your heart wouldn't make it till you're fifty years old.

MARCO: Thanks, Murray. . . . Take care of yourself, buddy. I owe you dinner.

(Enter Rocco, a burly man with a voice like a cement mixer.)

RICHMAN: Your father and I grew up together. . . . Your mother is a beautiful lady.

ROCCO: She sure is . . .

RICHMAN: Your uncle—the first time I had him, he was thirteen years old.

ROCCO: Yup.

RICHMAN: I represented Nicole when she killed her mother, when she cut her mother's throat.

ROCCO: Yes, yes, I remember that.

RICHMAN: Your aunt winced at me. She said, "How could you represent her?" I said, "Well, I represented you, what was wrong with that?" She said, "That terrible girl, she killed my sister."

ROCCO (*laughing*): I know that. I know . . .

RICHMAN: She did one year. . . . Isn't that funny?

(Enter Charlie, a hulking young Albanian-American, wearing unlaced Timberland boots, baggy jeans, an open-necked sports shirt, and a fair weight of gold around his neck. He hands Murray a check for ten thousand dollars.)

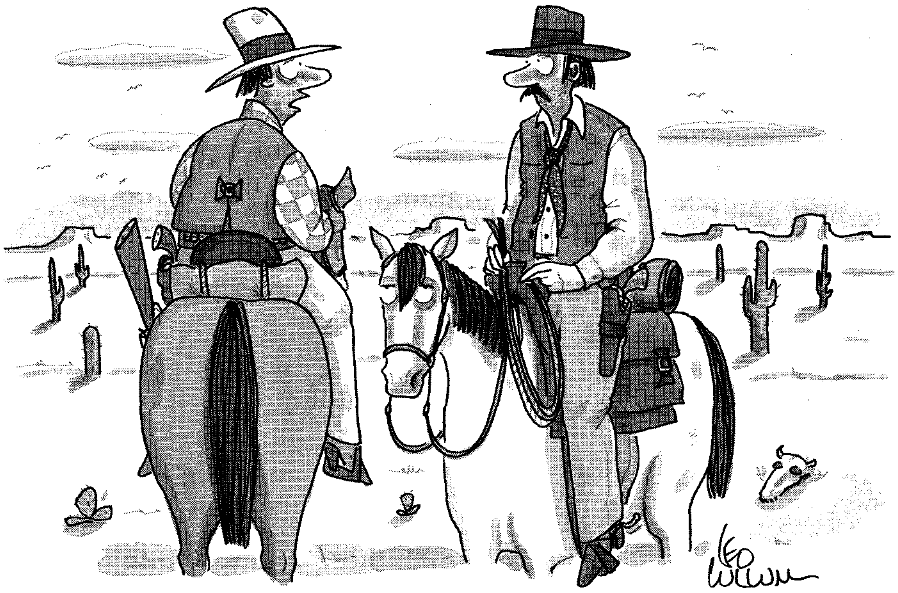
RICHMAN: Ahhh—love it. I love it when you bring my money. Makes me very happy. My favorite commodity. In any event—we got a couple weeks yet. We're gonna go to appellate with the gun. We're gonna win the gun case. And we'll deal with the murder case after.

This was Richman at work, rocking and swivelling in his big executive chair, talking around a fat Havana cigar, wearing a pair of suspenders embroidered with little blindfolded figures of Justice holding her scales. A number of his phone calls were entirely personal: setting up a dinner date with his pal the former Police Commissioner Bill Bratton at the East Harlem Italian restaurant Rao's, which enjoys a reputation as a hangout for mobsters, entertainers, professional athletes, and cops; or chatting proudly about the doings of his daughters—Stacey, the lawyer, and her younger sister, Nicky, a social worker. Once, when Stacey popped in, Richman mentioned a murderer he had defended. Stacey, who is thirty-four, with a fluid, self-assured manner, big blue eyes, and big blond hair, which she pushes around her head in waves, took up the cue: "He's absolutely charming. . . . He is really a nice man, notwithstanding the murder. But murderers are people, too."

"They need love also," Richman said.

"They do," Stacey said.

When we were alone again, Richman said, "You know the one thing I like about criminals over so-called straight people? There's a certain simplicity in most of their lives that does not exist in the rest of the population. I find crimi-



"This is where our trails divide, Luke. You have my E-mail address, right?"

nals, even the fraudulent guys, are more honest than the straight people. They know they're bad people and they're doing bad things, but they don't feel lying is an appropriate thing to do. They'll say, 'I didn't do it,' but you know, there is a certain degree of lack of sophistication with relation to it." He said, "By and large, murderers are the straightest guys in the world. Murderers are great, great clients. They've done the ultimate crime, I suppose, and everything else doesn't really trouble them." He said, "I don't buy this concept of the sociopathic personality, the person that has no sensitivity, no feeling, cold-blooded, the cold-blooded killer. I never met a cold-blooded killer. Everybody's a diamond. There're so many facets. It depends on what angle you come at the person from." Never mind Billy No Brains. Richman's angle remained fundamentally romantic. After all, he told me, he knew what it was like to have one's fate hanging on the benefit of a jury's doubt.

In August of 1977, he learned from a reporter at the *Times* that he had just been indicted by the United States Attorney Robert Fiske (who more recently served as Kenneth Starr's predecessor as Whitewater special prosecutor), for conspiracy to commit fraud and other related charges. At issue was a real-estate deal that Richman had helped orchestrate: A building was for sale in the South Bronx, and a federally funded drug-treatment program called SERA wanted to buy it. Instead, Richman and four partners—including the executive director of SERA and a state senator—formed a shell company and bought the building themselves. They then sold it to SERA for an instant profit of two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. The scheme was exposed by the *Times*, and Richman found himself involved in a court case in which he could see no humor at all. His kids were teased at school, a number of his friends stopped calling, and he says, "The inner pain was enormous. I was unable to think straight. I even contemplated suicide." Richman's trial lasted four weeks, and although he was finally acquitted, he says that he has never fully recovered—"I was livid, full of hate, and distrustful, downright paranoid. I could now appreciate what it was to be a defendant"—and when he resumed his practice, he did so with a vengeance.

For all his ready outrage, Richman always tells the young associates in his firm that the key to keeping one's equilibrium in the world of criminal law is to avoid taking it too seriously. (And, he said, "All the young lawyers I've helped are doing great—except the two who're in jail, one for money laundering and one for murder.") "This business is a bullshit business anyway," he told me on several occasions. He said, "It's a psychological game as well as anything else. Is it for real? I don't know. We're dealing with real people, with real lives, and real unhappiness. And it's like a game. Everybody's playing his hand."

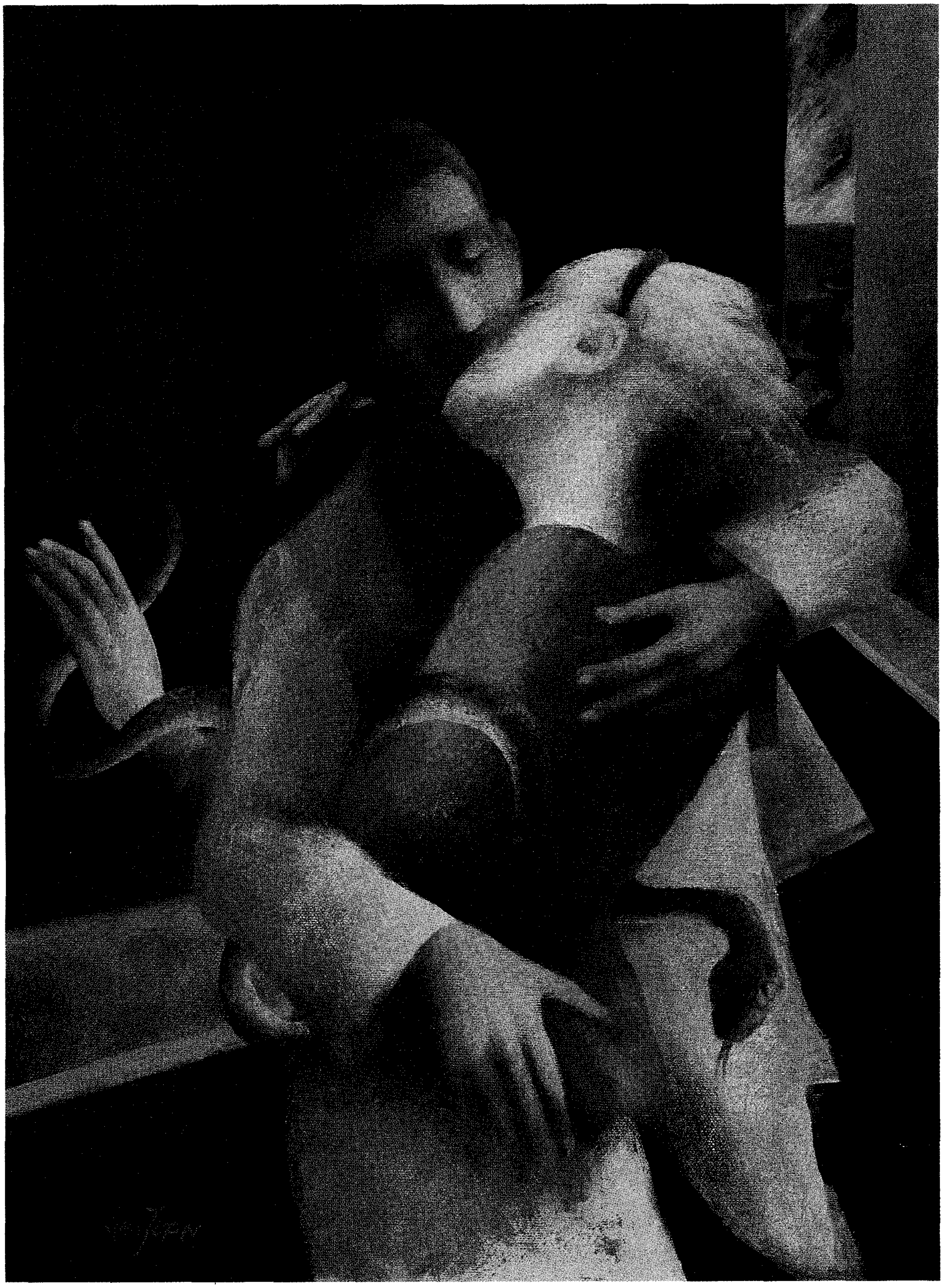
When he speaks in this way, Richman's pragmatic cynicism is tempered by a mood of quasi-mystical existentialism; his eyes widen, and his voice softens, taking on a confiding tone, as he pursues the notion that there is no solid, objective reality—only interpretation. Richman, whose favorite book is Camus's "The Fall," told me that his father always said that life is a dream, and that he shares that belief. "What *is* is what you make of it," he said, and, "The past doesn't exist, there's only how we remember it," and at least once a day when I was with him he recited the words "The truth is that there is no truth." Richman attributed this last aphorism to Isaac Bashevis Singer. When I asked for the reference, he expressed astonishment that I was ignorant of Singer's story "A Crown of Feathers," which he then told, at length and entrancingly. But, when he got to the words in question, they turned out to be spoken not by Singer, in an authorial voice, but by the Devil.

One morning last September, I met Richman for breakfast at his Manhattan apartment, a two-bedroom duplex penthouse overlooking the East River, on East Seventy-second Street. The place was far from ostentatious, but as he gave me a tour of the living quarters, upstairs, he showed me a pair of marble-lined bathrooms, and said, "This is my real pride—I have my bathroom, my wife has hers, and we've got one downstairs—'cause when I was growing up we had one little bathroom, seven people fighting for it. That's what you strive for, the little things." Richman was in top spirits: the evening before, in Brooklyn, his daughter Stacey had won her first murder case. "Not guilty," Richman proclaimed, and repeated the words, beaming, as if reciting the name of his first grandchild. He could hardly wait to get downtown, to spread the news in the courthouses, where he had a full morning schedule.

The first stop was a sentencing hearing for a man named David Palma, a chronic alcoholic, who had killed two people and seriously wounded another while driving drunk—without a license, and on parole—then fled the scene. Richman had already secured him a fantastic deal for the accident. Now he argued for further leniency in the parole violation, telling the judge, It's double jeopardy, there are bodies, yeah, but it was an accident, that doesn't show violence, the guy's a drunk, we know he's a drunk, you were supposed to put him in a program, which didn't happen, so you share the blame here. The judge answered, "There are people I'm convinced need the structure of imprisonment," but he gave Palma a minimum sentence—five to ten years on all the charges. As we left the courtroom, Richman threw up his hands. "I did what I have to do, but do I have to feel good about it?" he said, and we hurried off to the arraignment of a group of alleged Lucchese crime-family associates from New Jersey, who had been rounded up on racketeering charges in a bewildering case based on tens of thousands of wiretapped phone calls.

Then another courtroom, where Richman's client was a young black man named Sidney Crockett, who was being sentenced for a string of armed robberies he'd committed during a drug binge. At this point, the judge had a choice of sentencing him to anywhere from fifteen to eighteen years in prison, and Richman told me, "I'm just trying to save him three years." Crockett himself asked the judge to consider that he wasn't fully responsible because of the drugs. She listened, and exploded, "Your speech reminds me of my favorite cartoon. There's a woman judge and the defendant says, 'So I pulled the trigger and suddenly shots rang out.' Mr. Crockett, get over it. You were responsible. If you were on crack, you were responsible for being on crack." And with that she sentenced him to fifteen years, just as Richman had wanted. "You see," he said, "I don't work for a living. I posture. I get up in the morning, I posture ten minutes here, posture ten minutes

SKETCHBOOK BY ANA JUAN



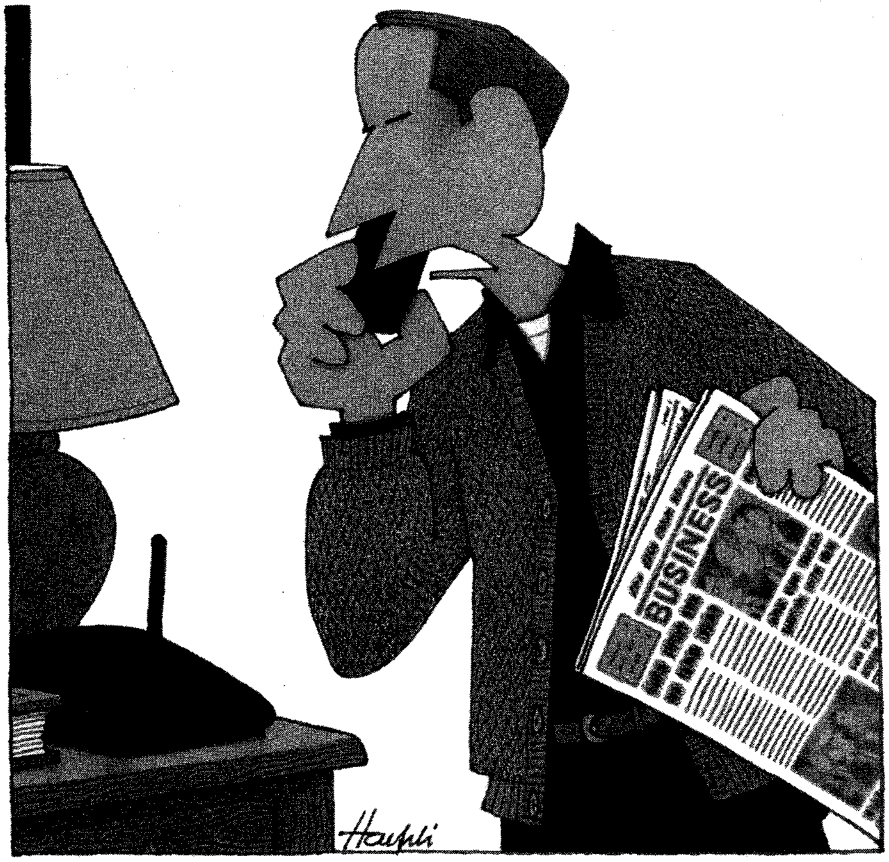
there, posture the next place for ten minutes. At the end of the day, my back hurts from posturing."

We had lunch at Forlini's, behind the courts on Baxter Street, a restaurant that enjoys a brisk traffic of lawyers and judges. Richman, who keeps kosher but otherwise declares himself unreligious, consumed a massive chopped salad, then shook hands at a half dozen tables on his way out the door. His car, a silver Acura, and his driver, a professional bartender named Gary Cancro, were at the curb, waiting to take him to midtown for a meeting with lawyers representing a record producer named Un, who claimed that Jay-Z, the rap musician whom Richman represents, had stabbed him. Spinning up the F.D.R. Drive, in a wash of autumnal sunshine, Richman treated himself to a cigar, and worked his phone, speaking in a contented purr, saying things like "Hey baby, howyadoin'?" and "Just make me look good," and "Would you do that for me?" I wasn't really listening, but, as we pulled up to our destination, his voice took on an abrupt, urgent pitch, and I heard him say, "Well, if the door's locked, try the windows. Force a window, break in, and call me immediately." When he stepped out of the car, his face had lost its color. "That was Stacey," he told me, and explained that his wife, who had spent the night alone at their house in Rockland County, hadn't answered the phone all day; Stacey had gone to check on her, and found the car in the driveway, and nobody answering the bell. Richman's wife was in poor health, a severe diabetic, but she'd sounded all right when they'd spoken the night before.

"Not good," he said. "Not a good feeling." It was cool in the meeting room, but he was sweating and inattentive. Five minutes into the discussion, he asked another lawyer for his cell phone and rang Stacey. "Is she breathing?" he said. He was sitting inches from me, and I thought I heard Stacey say "Cold." With that, he hung up, said, "Gentlemen, this meeting's over," and bolted.

By the time I got home, there was a message from Richman on my machine, apologizing for his abrupt departure, and explaining that his wife had died. Andrea Richman was fifty-nine, they had been married thirty-eight years, and she'd had a heart attack. In her coffin, the family placed a small television set, a casino card, and a pair of sunglasses. "Just in case there's an encore," Richman told me. For seven days, he stayed home, sitting shivah, and at times the crush of well-wishers required delicate handling: judges had to be kept separate from the politicians and mobsters who had cases before them, and at least one "old friend" turned up wearing an electronic tracking bracelet during Bill Bratton's visit. Then, on the eighth day, Richman was back in the Bronx courthouse, on trial.

When I caught up with him again, shortly after Thanksgiving, he appeared as rambunctious as ever. But he kept saying he was tired, and Bratton told me, "His smile's still always ready and big, only it's felt a bit more forced in these last months—more of an effort." Over lunch one day, at a place called Pasta-Pasta, next door to his office, Richman said, "Don't let me fool you. I can't absorb this. She wasn't supposed to go first. Seven, eight, nine times a day still, I reach for the phone to tell her some joke, a piece of gossip, something about all these people we knew and this crazy life." His hand hung out in space as if over a phone that wasn't there, and his eyes dampened. "Fuck me," he said, "at least she made it long enough to hear about Stacey's big win."



"You have the wrong number. No one whose name is pronounced that way lives here."

The first time Stacey Richman tried a case for her father's firm, she was totally unprepared. She hadn't even expected to be in court that day. "I'd been sent to cover the Cellini family, a father and son who are not the most appealing-looking or behaving men," she told me. "They'd got into a brawl in small-claims court, and allegedly assaulted a court officer. I remember it being very entertaining, because they kept describing these guys diving across tables and throwing furniture, and in the summation I reënacted it all, because the father was huge and heavy and in terrible health and couldn't possibly go jumping around. I got them acquitted on all charges except contempt of court for the son, which was I think because during the summation he got up and farted, then sat back down, which really didn't help."

Stacey told me she had always promised her father that she'd be a lawyer when she grew up, and that she would work with him. But she didn't want to be seen by clients and court colleagues as someone who was doing what she did just because she was the big man's daughter. So after she graduated from Cardozo law school, in 1991, and went to Thailand to recover from the bar exam, she spent several years at a firm in Los Angeles, doing property and corporate litigation. She liked the L.A. weather but she missed the underworld whiff of home and, in 1996, returned east and dug in. Now she can't imagine ever doing anything but crime. "Look at the stakes," she told me. "In civil law, if you screw up, it's just money. Here, it's the client—it's his life, his time in jail—and you never know how much time people have in their lives."

To be sure, she told me, "there are people who're horrified by what I do. I've had guys break up with me for it. At parties, I'm like a circus bear, always this object of curiosity, people saying, 'You seem nice, reasonable, caring, and yet you hang out with murderers.' Well, accused murderers." Having grown up in the Richman household, Stacey can't quite understand what the fuss is about. "There were always clients around. They were all very polite, everybody had a family, we'd go to their holidays, Christmas at their homes. There was nothing nefarious about it," she said, adding, "I remember once, a woman we knew shot her husband in the street, and we sat all day with her in the cell. But I didn't think there was anything strange about it. She taught us Spanish. I figured all kids had the same experience."

Stacey's younger sister, Nicky, a petite thirty-year-old redhead, has similar memories of her father. "He used to love taking us to work with him—to court, to meet the judges, sit on the bench, go in the cells," she told me. "He'd miss the exit on the parkway and forget to take me to nursery school, and, whoops! I'd go to jail with him instead." When the parents of her first-grade class were invited to come in and talk about their work, Richman showed up and staged a trial. "I was the accused criminal, and I allegedly stole a cupcake," Nicky said. "He had the whole class participate. It was sensational—the first time I understood what he did—and in the end we all got cupcakes." But Nicky, who shares her sister's sunny, at-home-in-the-world spirit, never wanted to be a lawyer. When it comes to the family business, she told me, "It's actually nice for me just to observe."

Stacey, however, described herself as "obviously a product of my father," and in preparing for her big lawyerly rite of passage—her first murder trial—she had repeatedly returned to the scene of the crime, in East Flatbush, to learn what she called "the perspective of the neighborhood," so as to be able to "destroy" one of the prosecution's main witnesses. "This guy would've had to see down three football fields at night and identify a black man," she said. "It was impossible, and I was appalled. This was about putting a young guy away for twenty-five years to life." Her client was twenty-two at the time of the killing, and he subsequently served time in jail for grand larceny. Stacey said she was convinced that he wasn't the murderer, but she also said, "It's possible, and I'll never know." And she wasn't sure, either, about the case she was on when we met in December. Her client, who was on parole for armed robbery, was charged with burglary, grand larceny, and possession of stolen goods. "On the evidence, the case could go either way," she said. As the trial progressed, Stacey reported to me that she felt increasingly persuaded of her client's innocence. "I really care what happens to this guy, that's the worst part," she said on the night before the verdict, and the next day she called to announce, "I've had great wins and now I've had my great loss." Still, she took consolation in the fact that she'd done all she could, and she told me, "The fact that I really believe and I'm so gullible is why I can be so good at what I do."

Nicky says that Stacey won't let her come to court when she's on a case, and she figures that's because their father is a tough act to follow. "I remember one summation I saw him give," Nicky said. "He had a pen in his hand, and he got so intense that he had clasped his hands together, forgetting that he had the pen. He stabbed his hand, and the blood was running down his hands, and he didn't stop. He didn't miss a beat." Even at this point in his career, his avidity astonishes her. "He can still surprise himself, and that's just colossal," she said, adding, "Every success really is so meaningful for him, although a little less so now without my mom." In fact, she told me, "I think the only thing he regrets in life is that he couldn't do anything to prevent my mother's death."

Stacey agreed. "I think this period is really hard for my father. He's confused, trying to stay busy, and angry that he's spent his life doing things for people and here there's simply nothing to be done. Here there's no appeal."

As a father of daughters, Richman told me, he tends to be wary of rape cases. But in mid-June of 1998, after a twenty-seven-year-old named Earl Simmons was charged with rape, sodomy, and unlawful imprisonment, Richman was asked to take the case. Simmons's accuser, a stripper at a Harlem night club, said that he had picked her up at the club, invited her to a party, then taken her to an apartment in the South Bronx, where he forced himself on her. Richman had never heard of Simmons, who is better known as the gangsta-rap star DMX, but he quickly learned that the musician's newly released first album, "It's Dark and Hell Is Hot," which had hit the top of the *Billboard* pop charts, included a revenge fantasy song, "X-Is Coming," with the words "I'm comin' in the house . . . and if you've got a daughter older than fifteen, I'm-a rape her! Take her on the living room floor, right there in front of you." What's more, DMX reportedly had a record of arrests for drugs, fare-beating, larceny, and resisting arrest. So Richman wasn't exactly prepared to believe his client's claim that he'd never met the woman and was in another state at the time of the rape. But it was the rapper's word against the stripper's, and he decided to take a gamble; he asked DMX to submit to a DNA test for comparison with the prosecutor's evidence. DMX didn't hesitate, and the results ruled him out as the rapist. "A great win," Richman said, "because, you know, rape is a career-ending type of charge."

Until he met DMX, Richman had been happily unaware that a gangsta-rap scene existed. "And I'm pretty cool," he assured me. "I'm out there." Now, suddenly, rappers were coming to him with their gun, drug, and assault cases—"one after another after another after another." DMX has proved a steady source of repeat business. Last year, in Westchester County, Richman got another case against him disposed of—for possession of a gun and of drugs—and he is working on still another gun case for him, in New Jersey. "Murray does a wonderful job," DMX told me at the courthouse in White Plains, moments after the gun-and-drugs case was settled. He was having a hard time getting out of the building, as court officers crowded around for autographs. He was yawning and shivering, scratching himself through his T-shirt and barely awake after spending the night before celebrating his thirtieth birthday. But he delighted in his fans' attention. When we finally retreated to his truck in the basement parking lot, he said, "Thank God for DNA," and told me about a recent assault case that had also been a close call. "Cost me a hundred thousand dollars in civil court," the rapper said. "I remember, after I was beating the guy, I had his skin all under my fucking ring—his skin all in the diamonds. But my lawyer got me off the criminal bit."

When Richman later asked me what DMX had said, and I told him about the ring, his response was "Stupid case." The only thing that had ever shocked him about his work with rappers was the press attention it brought him. He'd seen nothing like it, even when he helped Reagan's former Labor Secretary, Raymond Donovan, get acquitted of multiple counts of fraud and larceny after an eight-month trial, in 1987. "What's a higher-profile case, a Cabinet officer in the United States government or a rapper?" Richman asked me, and he said, "Forty years I broke my ass in this business. Forty years I built up a hell of a win record. Tremendous. People always acknowledged who I was in the legal community. I always got to play. Always. But the general community, who the hell knew? Then I got a couple of rappers, and suddenly even *Der Stern,* from Germany, is calling me."

Richman wasn't complaining. In contrast to the Mafia, he said, "Rappers pay wonderfully, rappers never skip fees," and their world held no allure for him. "I can't understand the music and I never listen to it in my life," he told me a year ago, shortly after attending an awards ceremony with his client Jay-Z. "It was a horror for me," Richman recalled. "An entourage of forty people. We were like trees walking. I couldn't see, couldn't do anything. I'm sitting there like a jerk. Who wants to be bothered? I don't enjoy that. See women half-naked? I can see them half-naked in the magazines. I don't have to see these kids jockeying for position to get other people's attention. That's what it was. And the crush? Freaking crush is unbelievable. You can't even breathe, much less anything else. And the smell of pot? You can get high just walking in. I don't need it at all."

Since then, however, Richman has come to recognize in the rap world many of the elements that have often attracted him to his clients' subcultures: an idea of crime as rebellion against society's norms, of have-nots getting theirs against nearly Darwinian odds, of minorities gate-crashing their way into the heart of a culture that shuns them. It might be stretching the point to say that gangsta rappers have restored Richman's faith in the old American legend of the outlaw as a vanguard of social progress—"Live free or die," "Don't tread on me," that sort of thing. But, a few months ago, as he prepared for a pretrial hearing in the shooting and gun-possession case against Shyne and Puff Daddy, he told me that he had begun, with the help of lyric sheets, listening to his clients' music, and he said, "I do intend to understand it. Look, it's the poetry of our time, whether we like it or not ourselves. We may not be able to relate to it. But it is absolutely symbolic of what's going on in the world today, just like rock and roll was thought to be evil and causing criminal conduct among the youth in those days, and now it's all staid, so respectable. This, too, will get respectable."

Richman was working up a head of steam before entering the courtroom that day, because he had heard that the prosecutor, Matthew Bogdanos, was intending to use lyrics from Shyne's songs as evidence of his murderous state of mind at the time of the shooting. "Ridiculous," Richman scoffed. Sure, the rapper's début album, which was released in September and had already sold hundreds of thousands of copies, was full of loving references to things like AKs, Glocks, semi-autos, shotguns, and MAC-10s. Sure, in the song "Bang" he says, "Niggas wanna bang, we could bang out / Till the clip's done, or your vital arteries hang out." So Shyne was no Gandhi. But, Richman protested to the judge when the hearing got under way, "those lyrics postdate the act in question." And, besides, they were just art, just role-playing, just performance. "Dostoyevsky wrote about murder—does that implicate him as a murderer?" Richman asked the *Post* reporter Laura Italiano on his way out of the courtroom, and he added, "When Eartha Kitt salaciously sings 'Santa Baby,' does that mean she really wants to sleep with Santa Claus?"

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Richman was on a roll. Prosecutors, he told me, "use the music to get attention for themselves—you know, you don't make a name unless you become a giant killer, so you create a giant and then you kill him. That's what you get with these rappers. These are nice, ordinary kids, the ones I've had contact with. I'm amazed at how intelligent they are. I think Jay-Z is one of the smartest gentlemen I've ever seen, and Shyne's one of the sweetest." The way he made it sound, his rap clients' problems were a result not of gunplay but of appearances and perceptions. "Each culture has its own standards," he said, and "The superculture doesn't understand the other culture." That's why Richman keeps one of his office closets packed with all sizes of pressed suits, dress shirts, and an array of smart ties. "I dress the client," he said. "Because that makes the impact on a jury. A lot of times if I'm representing a young black kid, he'll come in his hip-hop clothes and he thinks he's looking good, but he doesn't understand his need to impress a society he does not relate to. I'm there to bring him up short, say, 'Look, stupid, do it my way. You do it my way and I'll walk you.' " Or, at least, he added, "Let the kid be convicted on the facts, not the way he looks."

But Richman didn't seem to believe that any amount of costuming could save Shyne from jail, and he spent December trying unsuccessfully to negotiate a plea bargain with Bogdanos. After all, he told me, "attempted murder is a charge for a very, very unsuccessful person. You've got the witness still." Of course, that's not how he explained the case to the jurors in his opening statement last month, when

"Of course my cough is productive!"

he informed them that once they heard the evidence they would have no honorable choice but to speak the words "not guilty." Shyne, Richman argued to the jury, which was mostly black, was on trial not for what he had done but for who he was—a kid from the Brooklyn ghetto, "raised by his mother and his grandmother, with whom he still lives," a kid with talent and drive, "a kid who had a dream, and his dream was music, his dream was hope, his dream was to get out of Brooklyn." Because of his great talent, Shyne had known great success, and because of this success, Richman claimed, he had incurred the envy of violent antagonists, who wanted to bring him down out of sheer spite.

Richman said that shortly before Shyne's arrest the rapper had been shot at in the street outside a recording studio, and that on the night of his arrest there were people in the club seeking to make trouble, "people of violence," who said of his client, "Let's cap that nigger, let's melt down his cheddar—gold and copper." And, Richman asked, where are those people who started the trouble? Who are they? "You have the entire city police in the city of New York at your beck and call," he said, looking aghast. "You don't know who those persons are?" No, he said, the giant-killing prosecution was only after the celebrities. This was the ultimate thrust of his oration, and he made it with a startling declaration: "My client is guilty. He is guilty of being poor, guilty of having hope, guilty of having a chance and opportunity, even guilty of wanting a better life. But he is not guilty of these crimes. He is not guilty of attempted murder. He is certainly not guilty of assault in the first degree or possession of a weapon with intent to use."

Richman said nothing about whether Shyne might be guilty of the lesser charges against him, including reckless endangerment and gun possession, which are also punishable by stiff jail time. When I asked him about this omission, he just smiled and shrugged. "Six weeks to go, anything can happen," he said, as he left the courthouse with his client at dusk, slipping unnoticed past a knot of television cameramen and music fans who were hoping for a glimpse of Puff Daddy. "Not guilty. Not guilty," the fans chanted. Shyne did not smile. He saw his mother and grandmother off to Brooklyn, and left for the recording studio, where he is trying to cut a new album before the jury reaches a verdict. Richman climbed into his car and headed back to the Bronx for a meeting at his office. "A new murder, vehicular homicide," he told me, as we rode uptown. "Actually, not new, two years old, but the woman just broke up with her boyfriend and he ratted her out." He bit the end of a fresh cigar, lit up, and for a moment he appeared to fall asleep. Then his phone rang, he answered it, "Hi, babe," and after a beat he said, "Me? I'm on trial. I'm always on trial. Story of my life."

During the time I spent with Murray Richman, I frequently found myself thinking of a passage in Denis Johnson's novel "Angels," which tells of a lawyer named Fredericks, standing in the sun near the state penitentiary in Florence, Arizona, moments after a client of his, who had killed a bank guard during a botched robbery, is executed there:

> He was still young, and it was completely possible that soon he'd begin carrying out his original intention of getting himself elected to something or other. But the truth was, he knew, that he'd been irretrievably sidetracked right at the start by his stint as a public defender, and that he'd probably continue the rest of his life as a criminal lawyer because, *in all honesty, there was a part of him that wanted to help murderers go free.*

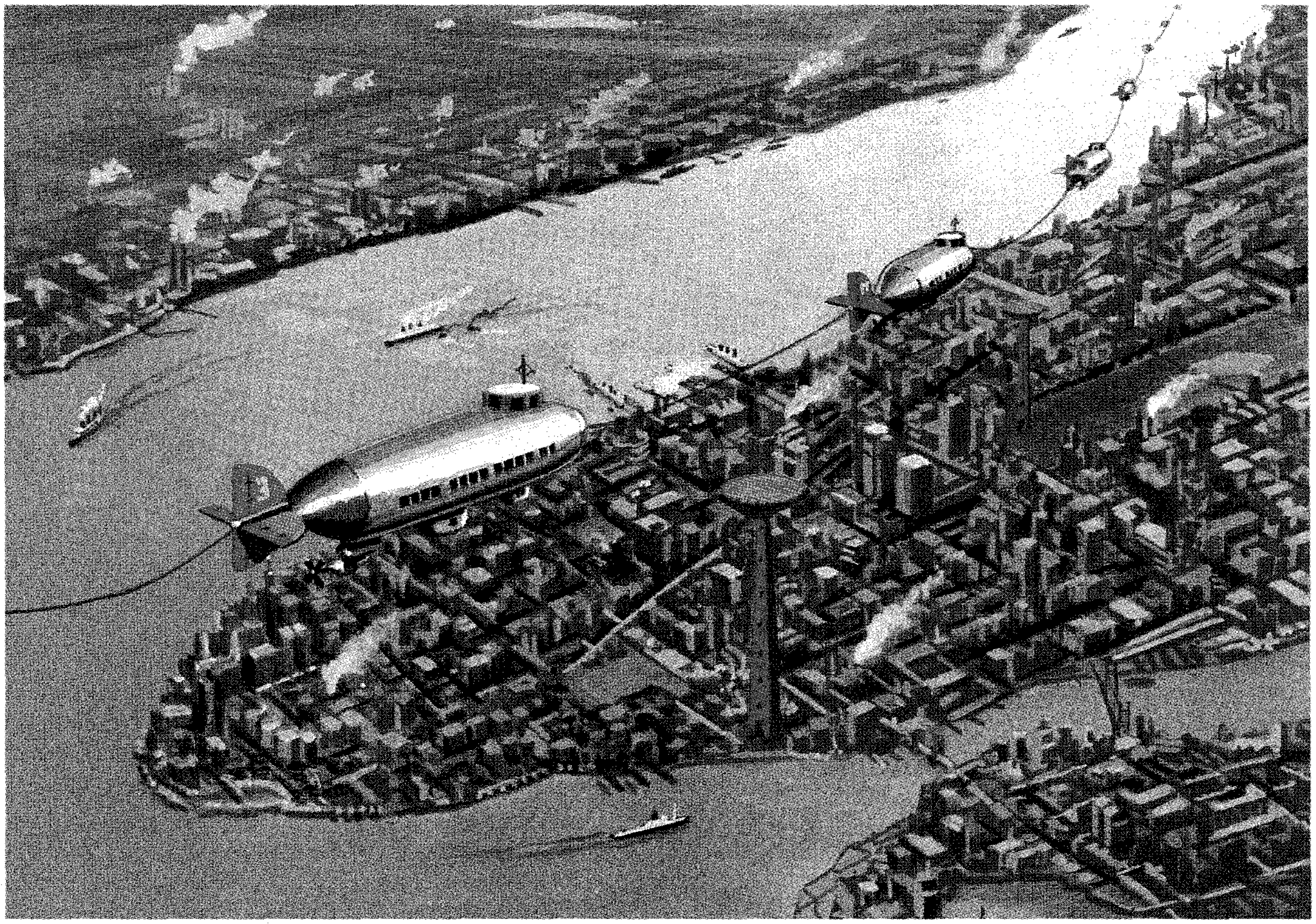
Johnson doesn't say why Fredericks harbors such a desire. We can only imagine. And so it is with Richman. He spoke of criminal-defense work as a constitutional "duty," but he had chosen to do it, and he chose his clients: not only the unjustly accused or improperly prosecuted, not just those driven by want, ignorance, or self-defense, but also those who basked in corruption and made careers of predation. He sought them out; they appealed to him and amused him; he liked them and he liked to be liked by them. He loved the law, and at the same time he craved the company of the lawless. "There but for the grace of God go I," he often said of his clients. These words did not humble him; rather, it seemed that they made him feel that he was getting away with something. And that feeling liberated him. His clients helped him go free.

At the same time, Richman told me, he could never shake the feeling of being a defendant himself. "I still think of it every day," he said. "That's my nightmare. I don't dream about monsters or terrorists. I wake up in a sweat, dreaming about waiting for my jury to come back." ♦

PORTFOLIO BY BRUCE McCALL

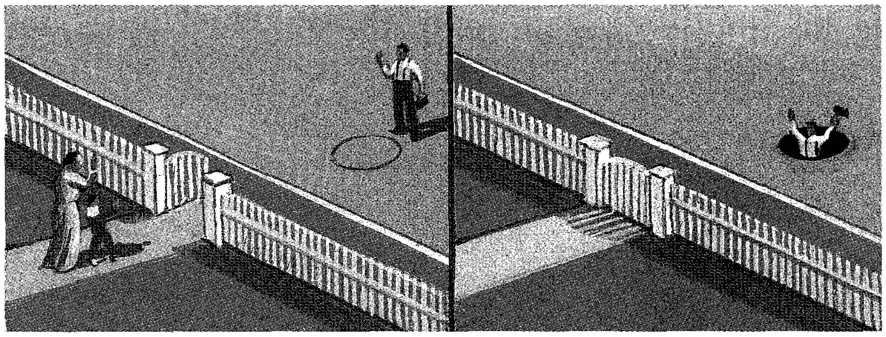
NEW YORK'S TRANSPORTATION FUTURE IS COMING TOMORROW

1925 travels to 1950, and boggles.



THE SUBWAY OF THE AIR

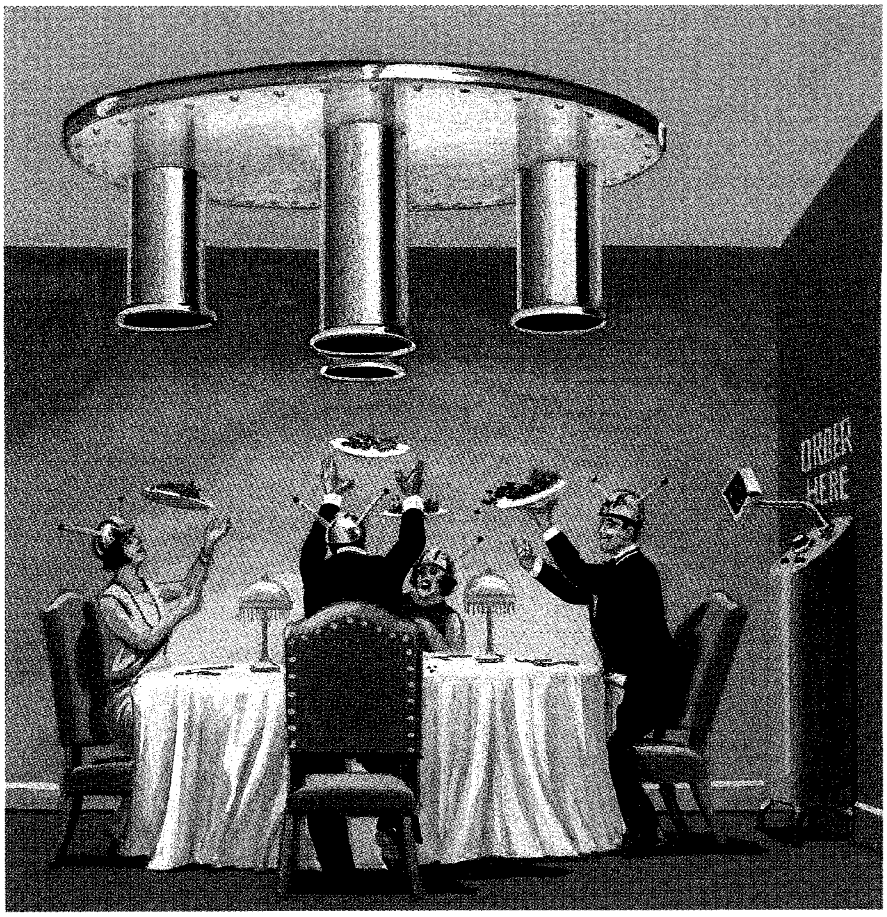
Strung together like so many all-metal airborne sausages, Zepp-Liners such as these will by 1950 have rescued riders from the subway's Stygian tunnels, long since flooded for fish farming. See the elevated boarding platforms reaching toward the heavens! Zepp-Liner punctuality and reliability will add untold millions of dollars to the region's economy by abolishing lateness and lost labor. And health professionals predict that escaping the disease-ridden subways to breathe fresh air far above the treetops will extend the average rider's chest measurement by five inches and his life span by forty years. A passage from Staten Island to Poughkeepsie will cost one cent in 1950 money. This reflects the happy fact that a provision in the Versailles Treaty obliges Germany to build four hundred Zepp-Liners by 1940, at a nominal price of no more than one dollar each, and to maintain the fleet in perpetuity, gratis. So does the late Great War's glory reach forward into the future.



"Farewell, Father!" A subterranean pneumatic tube will zoom the 1950 commuter from Nyack to New York City in seconds. Can you recognize the tube station in the picture at left? Why, it is a former manhole.

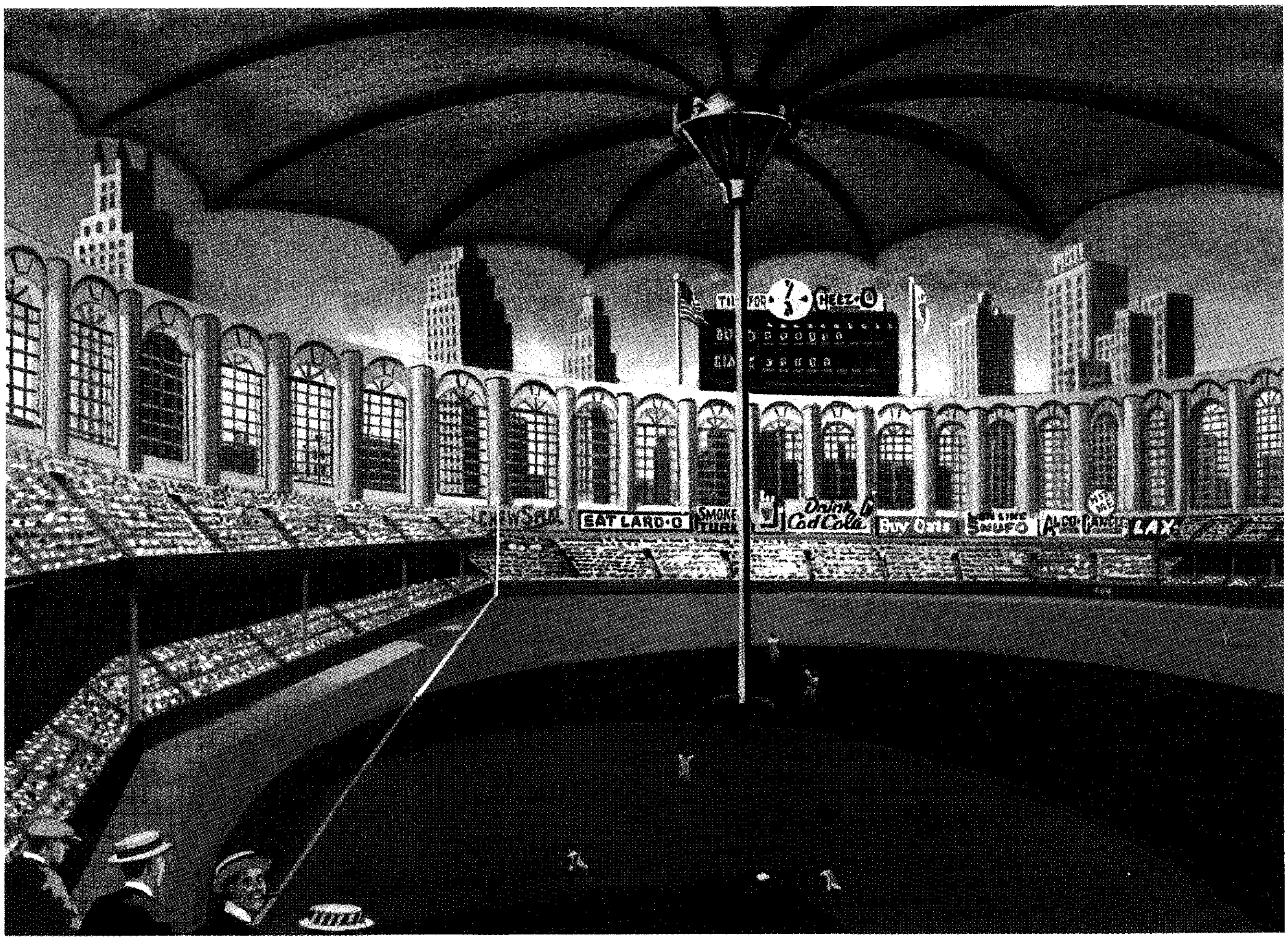
DINNER SERVED WITH A WHOOSH

Pneumatics will define smart dining in the New York of 1950. Orders will be placed by microphone and meals prepared in a vast, central underground kitchen, then rushed piping hot to waiting restaurant patrons in seconds through a spiderweb grid of pneumatic tubes that are hygienically swabbed every hour. Pity not the waiters thus thrown out of work. Most were foreigners and, as such, carriers of disease.



THE RAIN CHECK MADE OBSOLETE

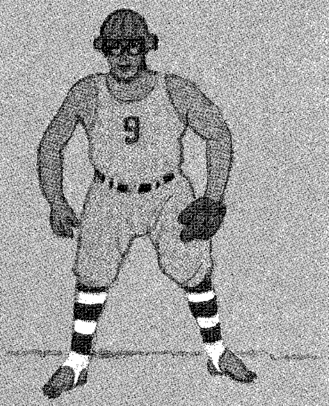
The New Polo Grounds atop Grand Central Terminal will hold more fans than all other baseball stadia combined, though not all at one time. And in the event of rain a giant umbrella standing in short center field will hydraulically unfurl in under two hours. Furled, the bulky obstacle will challenge outfielders, but no matter: the clubs' owners, knowing ballplayers' lazy habits, will cut their pay as a goad to alacrity!



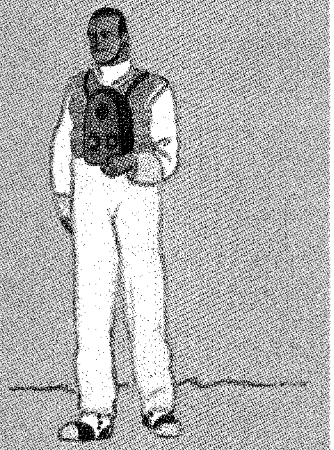
MASS LUNACY WILL BE TRIGGERED BY THE SUDDEN SHOCK OF TECHNOLOGICAL CHANGE

But foremost hypofuturists think that regular ice baths, if begun now, may prevent the stress-induced explosion of vital nerve cells. Those New Yorkers who remain sane shall dwell in a transportation paradise of hydraulics, magnetics, and radio-naphtha waves, and will bathe while they sleep to save time. Ponder, too, the one-month pregnancy. And, should muscles grow weak from lack of physical exertion, there will be a lozenge.

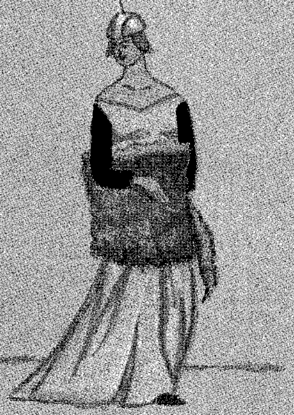
SOME LOOKS OF 1950



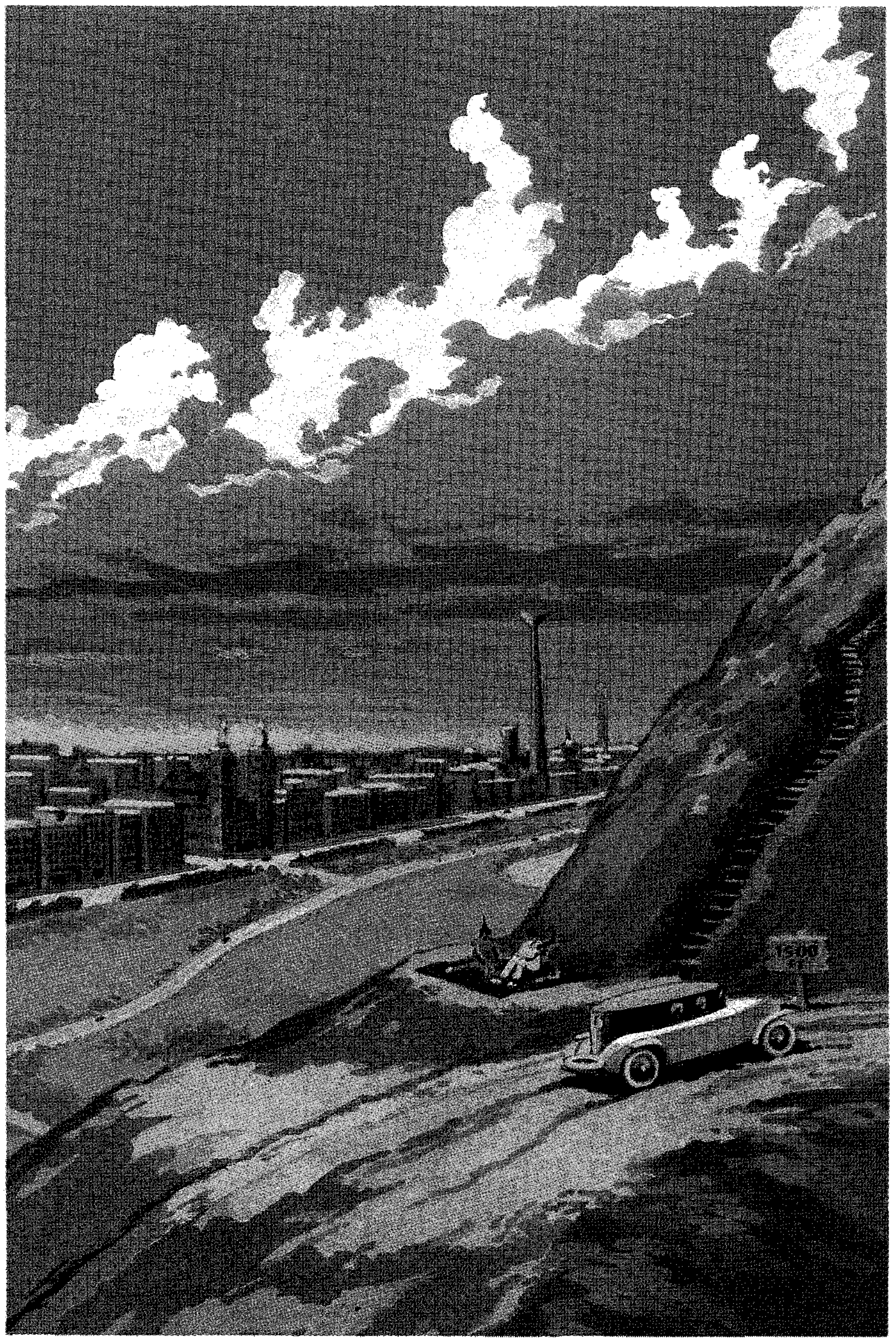
The ballplayer has X-ray goggles. Note bare feet.



Train conductor wears a powerful radio receiver.

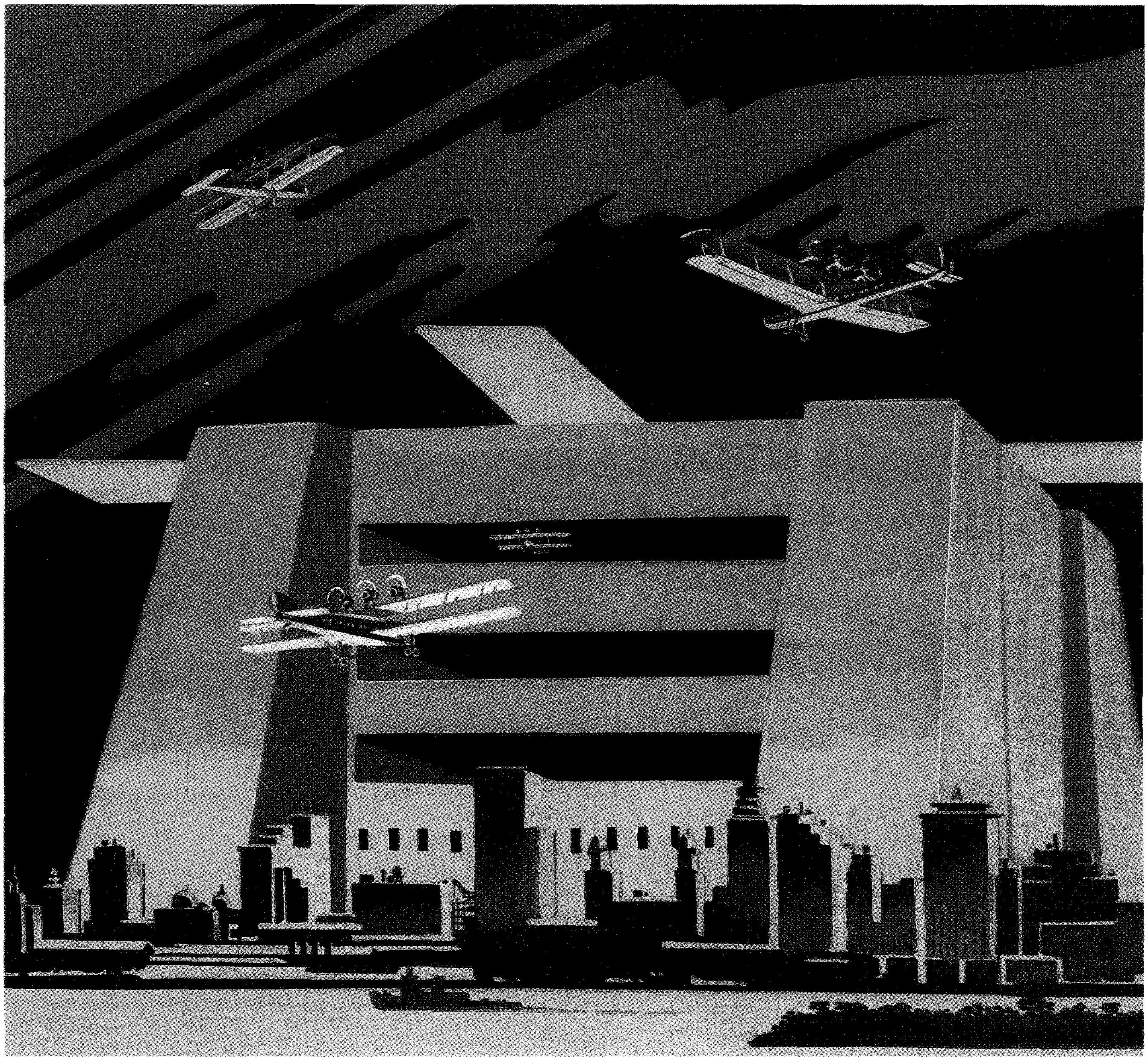


Aviatrix's costume will include a fur torso wrap.



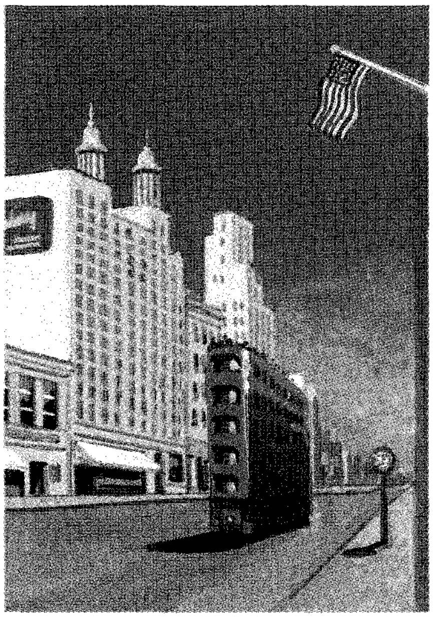
A MAN-MADE ALPINE MIRACLE RISES IN CENTRAL PARK

A volume of earth equivalent to six Paraguays, excavated in the construction of the Manhattan-Montauk Tunnel, will by the year 1950 have been trucked northward to Central Park, where, molded by more prisoners than there were slaves at the pyramids, an artificial mountain will rise, honoring our late President. All crags and scenic promontories, home to the only grizzly bears east of the Mississippi and attracting mountaineers from as far away as Albany, the mighty cone called Mt. Harding will stand so high that children clambering to its peak will cry and gasp in the cold, thin air.



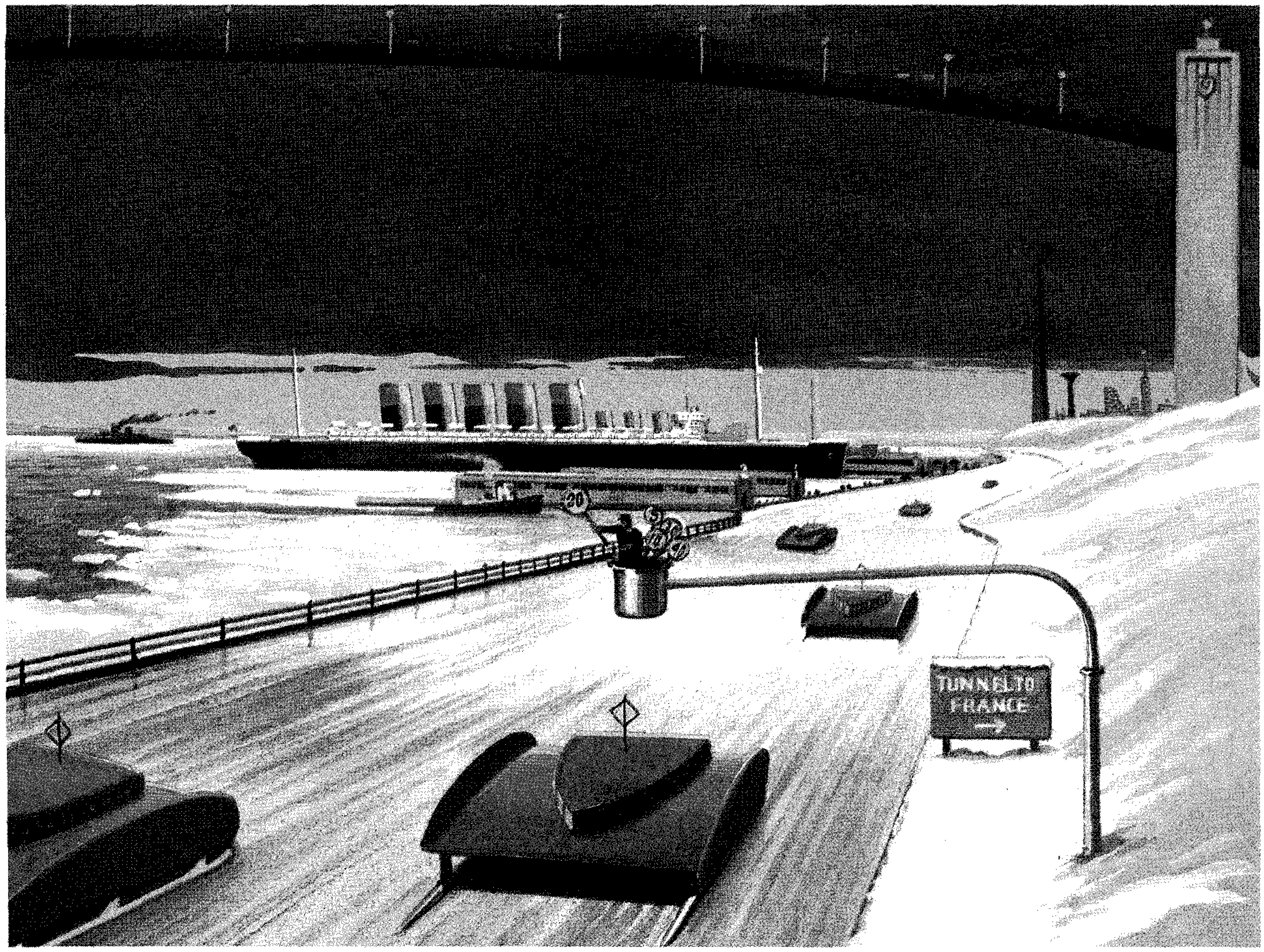
METROPOLITAN AIR DOCK: SEVENTEENTH WONDER OF THE WORLD

The air wayfarer of 1950, hanging upside down, like a bat, in a special webbing apparatus, will smile at his good fortune. The twelve-motor steamship of the sky in which he hangs will be equipped with a scenic veranda and a tuck shop. At the Metropolitan Air Dock, New York City's Brobdingnagian ziggurat of empyrean commerce, aeroplanes shall land indoors, safe from chance collisions with farm animals, hayricks, and the like. The Air Dock's vast interior will house an aeroplane factory, embassies of many nations, and, in its Spanish-tiled subterranean labyrinth, a holding pen with capacity for two thousand arriving immigrants. Dirt and grit, the aviator's bane, will be constantly vacuum-sucked from the great landing and taxiing halls by giant hoses, which will be easily capable of ingesting horses and pianofortes without jamming.

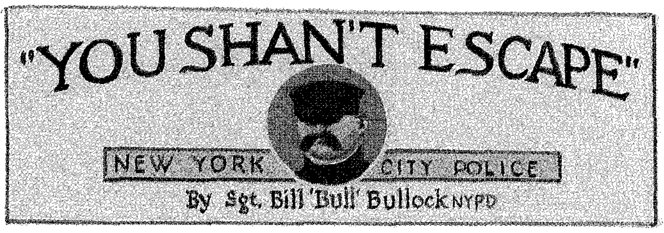


Guided by radio-naphtha waves and therefore needing no engine of their own, these silent-running five-deck omnibuses will produce enough pure ammonia gas so that the profits will underwrite free fares for one and all. Monies left over will go to the purchase of Holy Bibles for donation to the expected glut of lunatics.

THE HENRY HUDSON ICEWAY AND THE WEEHAWKEN BRIDGE GREET R.M.S. ANHEDONIA



See the traffic warden with his speed paddles signalling caution to the Moto-Skates racing north to Yonkers, their riders warmed by handheld radium stoves. The five-stack liner Anhedonia has just berthed after a twenty-four-hour dash from Southampton over hydrochemically heated sealanes, making of the Atlantic a millpond. She arrives just in time for King Edward VIII to catch the noon Magnetic Train to Niagara Falls to inaugurate the British Empire Elevator Games.

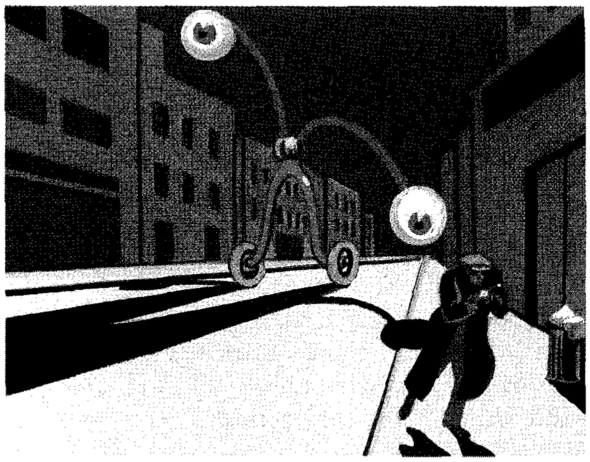


"YOU SHAN'T ESCAPE"

NEW YORK CITY POLICE

By Sgt. Bill 'Bull' Bullock NYPD

Morals ever decline in prosperous times. By 1950, the city's superior club- and shackle-makers will undoubtedly know the deepest secrets of pain. But hosannas must wait: police phrenologists predict that the "skull knob"—the bump, which we know to be evidence of a criminal mind—will by then mark one of every three heads! Thus, roving bulletproof hot-air police balloons will collect nude rooftop sunbathers in huge rope nets. Patterned on the land-mine principle, exploding faux cobblestones laid along parade routes will retard the anarchist riots and union marches so distracting to business leaders at luncheon. And let's not forget the electric "pep ray," guaranteed to galvanize hoboes and tramps into seeking useful employment.



Alcohol fiends who defy the Volstead Act will be hunted down by a motorized Twin Cyclops that will ceaselessly patrol the night streets. Observe its all-seeing "eyeballs," powerful lenses designed to detect the slightest bottle reflection and trigger an ear-piercing alarm.

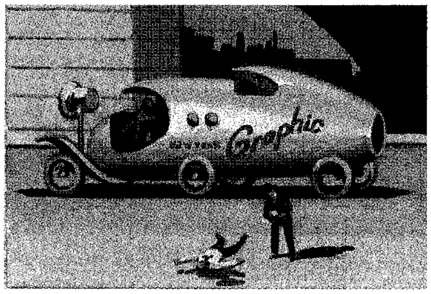
COMES 1950, WILL YOU BE A "SPEEDIAC" OR A "TRANSIPHOBE"?

So altered will our sense of human movement be by 1950 that university-trained experts foresee an epidemic of broken bones, as citizens (and not only the feebleminded!) regularly think they are at a standstill when they are moving at twenty miles per hour. Why not have your son begin doctor training now?

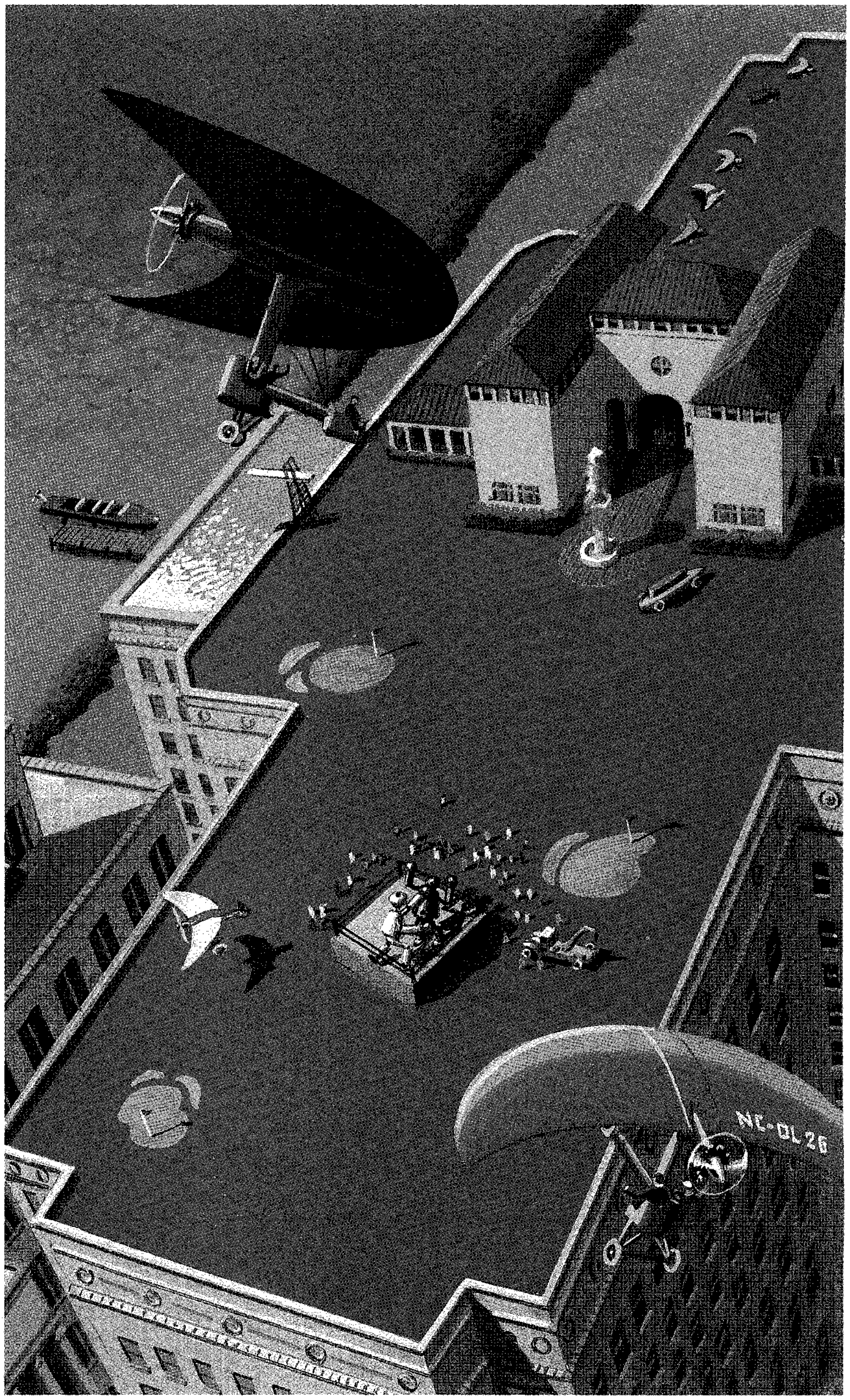
All present ideas of speed will be transformed. "Automobots" piloted by electric chauffeurs will be *too fast* to collide with one another. Milady's billets-doux will be written in seconds with her self-refilling diesel pen. Baseball-size heliumspheres will loft messages crosstown from office to office, dethroning King Telegraph.

Life's accelerated pace will dictate the creation of new government regulations. A kinetic tax will curb excessive activity by placing a levy on each individual's "energy index," to be determined by recording all movement on a knee-mounted meter. Meals will by law be a half hour in duration to lessen the gastric distress brought on by speed-eating. And, to minimize clogged pedestrian flow, the poor will be made to *keep moving* via dogtrotting "hurry squads" armed with cudgels.

The New York citizenry of 1950 will divide into two groups: Speediacs, who will be shod in special-order dance pumps, the faster to move along mirror-smooth city "slidewalks"; and Transiphobes, mainly the timid and the elderly, who will remain rooted in the old ways and sullenly resistant to Progress. The latter group will be forced out to the suburbs, for New York will be no place for laggards in this new Transportation Age.



Rocket-powered Newsmobiles like this will speed reporters to and from crime scenes so rapidly that tomorrow's scoop will be yesterday's news.



FOR MEN OF HIGH STATION, AN AERIE ABOVE THE PIGEONS

With Westchester County and southern Connecticut given over to molybdenum mining by 1950, wealthy landowners will build stately new homes atop Manhattan's tallest buildings and parachute to street level for shopping and the opera. We see here, in bird's-eye perspective, a typical summer's Sunday near Beekman Place. Sky flivvers are winging in to debouch their passengers onto the golf links surrounding Nova Moola, a forty-two-room marvel of prefabricated celluloid in the Moorish-Norman style. But hurry—the big boxing match is already under way! The giant robots, when not entertaining their master's guests thus, will be found helpfully engaged in yard work and rolling carpets. And, as the creatures have no brains, they cannot be inflamed and turned against the master by union agitators. ♦

© HALSMAN ESTATE

ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

THE FLAME

The battle over Martha Graham's dances.

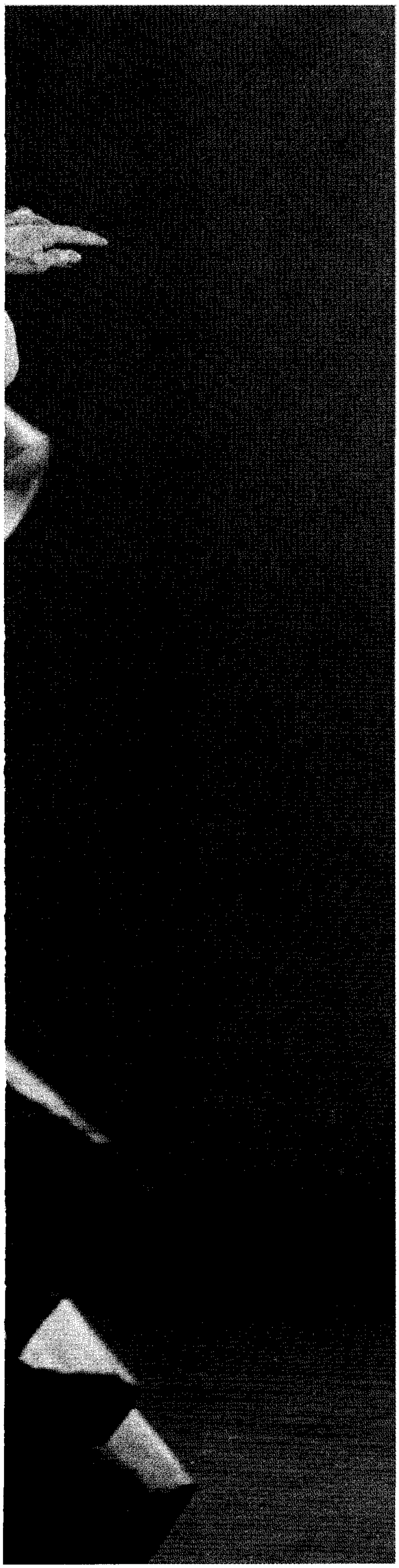
BY JOAN ACOCELLA

In 1991, at the age of ninety-six, Martha Graham died, leaving her entire estate to Ron Protas, a former photographer more than forty years her junior, who had been her closest companion for the last two decades of her life. The estate wasn't large in immediate financial terms—it was valued at three hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars—but it involved something you couldn't put a price on: her work. Graham was the most honored artist in the history of modern dance. No one except George Balanchine had anything approaching her influence on twentieth-century choreography, and, unlike Balanchine, who was carrying on the tradition of classical ballet, she more or less formulated the art she practiced. In the twenties, when she began her career, there was basically one kind of concert dance in America: ballet. By the thirties, thanks primarily to her, there was a second: modern dance. She brought to dance not just a new method but a new subject matter, the post-Freudian psyche—fear, wrath, sex—and, by wedding that subject to ancient myth, ennobled it. The most important modern-dance choreographers of the next generation, notably Merce Cunningham and Paul Taylor, worked for her before they made their names. Others studied her technique, which is now taught around the world. In the words of the critic Allan Ulrich, all American modern-dance choreographers are "the children of Martha," and all postmodern-dance choreographers are "the rebellious children of Martha." She changed ballet, too. The work of both Agnes de Mille and Antony Tudor bears her imprint to an almost embarrassing extent.

When Graham left her estate to Protas, it was assumed that it included the hundred and eighty dance works she created. In recent months, the estate has become the focus of a dispute over trademark and copyright law. Nevertheless, for the past decade the terms of Graham's will have been followed. No one has been allowed to perform her dances, or even to teach anything described as Graham technique, without Protas's permission. And, for the most part, no one could perform a Graham piece without his supervision, for, soon after her death, Protas, who had never danced professionally and had never been formally trained in dance, became the artistic director of her company.

The history of the company under Protas has been one of gradual dissolution. Many of the old dancers, who could best teach the work to the new dancers, walked out the door, and with them went the administrative staff. The company performed less and less; its debts mounted. A fight developed between Protas and a number of the trustees. Finally, last spring, the board of the Martha Graham Center—that is, the main company, a student company, and a school—suspended operations. To the dance world, this was astonishing news. The Graham troupe was the oldest dance company in America.

The trustees said that they would reopen as soon as they could raise the money to do so, and five months later, in October, they held a press conference to announce that, the dispute notwithstanding, the State of New York had awarded the center a grant that would enable the school to start up again in January of 2001. This was a festive gathering. Marvin Preston, the company's executive director, gave a happy speech, in



PHOTOGRAPH BY PHILIPPE HALSMAN

Graham dancing "Letter to the World" in 1946. Her work had become theatre, full of wheeling turns, off-center jumps, terrific falls, and sexual passion.

which he announced, "I see this as the moment we're turning the corner." People clapped and went home, only to later receive a press release from Ron Protas saying that he, too, intended to open a Martha Graham school. "It is hoped that the former Martha Graham Center will turn over any grant dollars that were earmarked for a school to that project," the press release concluded. Protas's attorney, Michael Quinn, later told me, "They've put the cart before the horse." The Graham Center "needs a license from Mr. Protas to operate a school in Martha Graham's name." He added, "People who dislike Mr. Protas or think they know better how to perform these works are not respecting Martha's own wishes."

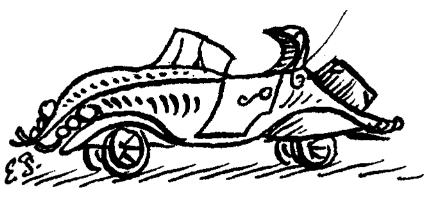
Graham did will her property to Protas. But did it occur to her that, with Protas in charge, the company she built might go under? Maybe so. Graham was an intense, volatile woman, who saw herself as a dancer, not a choreographer. She said that she made dances only in order to have something in which to perform. Many people did not take that statement seriously until the publication of "Goddess: Martha Graham's Dancers Remember," a collection of interviews by the journalist Robert Tracy, in 1996. One after another, Graham's dancers described how, in making her pieces, she usually choreographed only her own solos and most of the ensemble work. As for the other solos—and many of the major Graham pieces are a series of solos—she sent the dancers off to work them out themselves, and then she edited what they came up with. To her, dance was something extracted, with heated tongs, from the very core of the self. Why not for them also?

To someone operating from this point of view, a company that existed after her death could have no meaning. With the flame gone, what was the need of altar and priests? Graham said repeatedly that it didn't matter if her works survived her, and some see her will as proof that she meant this. Linda Hodes, a former Graham dancer—she originated the role of Joan of Arc in the 1955 "Seraphic Dialogue"—said to me, "If she had cared, she wouldn't have given the ballets to Ron Protas." The work wouldn't last, but it would play for a few years, compensating Protas for the time he spent with her in her old age.

The five hundred students who were scattered when the school shut its doors, and the dancers who were left without work when the company closed, would find their way, or not.

Graham was the eldest of three daughters born to Dr. George Graham, a specialist in mental disorders, and his wife, Jane Beers, a descendant of Miles Standish. (The couple also had a son, who died when he was two.) The two younger girls, prettier than Martha, were favored by their mother. Martha was her father's daughter. "He wanted a boy," she later wrote, "and I became the closest thing to it." In her posthumously published autobiography, "Blood Memory," she says that her father could intuit his patients' mental condition from their movements. "Movement never lies," Dr. Graham used to say, and this became his daughter's most famous pronouncement. Graham was imperious from childhood. When grownups asked her for a kiss, she would say, "My father doesn't approve of kissing. It isn't sanitary. But you may kiss my hand." Until she was fourteen, the family lived in Allegheny, Pennsylvania. Then, because her sister Mary had asthma, they moved to Santa Barbara, California. Graham saw this divided history as formative. From Allegheny, she believed, she inherited her Protestantism, her strictures; from Santa Barbara, she inherited her wildness.

Like many female artists, Graham got a late start. She decided to become a dancer at the age of seventeen, after seeing a concert by Ruth St. Denis, who, with Isadora Duncan, is considered one of the mothers of modern dance—and it was at Denishawn, the famous Los Angeles school headed by St. Denis and Ted Shawn, that she received her training. But she didn't take her first dance class until she was twenty-two, and she didn't found her own company until 1929, when she was thirty-five. (Dr. Graham had died in 1914, and Martha spent her early professional years in Broadway shows to help support the family.) She caught up fast, though, and soon she had created America's first modernist dance style. Early Graham dances such as "Heretic" (1929) and "Primitive Mysteries" (1931) are remarkable, first of all, for their abstraction. They are an enactment, not a narrative. Other choreographers were experimenting with abstraction at that time, but what is striking about Graham's early work is its severity, what people then would have called its ugliness. ("She looks as though she were about to give birth to a cube," the theatre critic Stark Young wrote.) Graham was part of the New York avant-garde of the twenties and thirties. In "Blood Memory," she tells of sitting with Alfred Stieglitz and reading with him Georgia O'Keeffe's "glorious letters" from New Mexico, including one "about her waking just before dawn to bake bread in her adobe oven." The Southwest, the dawn, bread, adobe: by now it's a cliché, modernism's embrace of the "primitive," the non-European. But it wasn't a cliché then, and Graham turned it into something tremendous. "Heretic" was about society's persecution of the nonconformist. Any would-be artist in downtown Manhattan could have made a piece about that, but who except Graham could have imagined the ensemble groupings she ranged against the heretic: great slabs and walls of dancers, wedges and arcs and parabolas?



In creating such things, she was greatly helped by the composer Louis Horst. A gruff, lovable man who took his dachshunds to work with him, Horst had been the music director at Denishawn. When Graham left to go to New York, Horst followed her and became her music director and her lover. He was to be the leading composition teacher in American modern dance, but his most important student was the young Martha Graham. Horst was the only one who could criticize her, persuade her to redo her work. He taught her to be simple and trenchant. Until 1935, she used no sets and only the plainest costumes. She avoided music with melodies. Dance was a holy language, independent of all other arts: an act of pain and transfiguration.

The dozen or so women who formed her company in the thirties embraced

THE CORRUPT TEXT

The child is feather to the man;
mice don't brood. The swiftest race
to the pie. In the sky an encomium
rewards all who notice it.
This isn't the way I meant to live
but I must or will have to move.

In broader streets the video preference
startles a dozing anomaly—"Come again?"
I just did. I want it to be all clean
and tasting of only distance and water.
There is a stairway in my pocket
and pheasants on the railway
and all I ever had was to be yours,
your instructor. Again I fell for it,
his pencil sharpener. Over time that
made him quite difficult and complicated.

Now is only sun, sunstrife and sea.

—*John Ashbery*

her faith. They weren't paid, and, according to one of them, Nelle Fisher, "we almost didn't want to be, because . . . it was complete dedication, like a sisterhood." The dancers had much to bear. Frequently, Graham got blocked, and then, Fisher said, she would "have a real breakdown, weeping and storming, with Louis trying to hold her head." Agnes de Mille, in her biography "Martha," writes that once, in the middle of creating a piece, Graham went into a depression for four days: "The company waited outside her bedroom, in a morbid stupor, as the clock ticked and the performance date drew near. At the end of the ordeal . . . Martha rose from her bed and came forth. 'Everything is clear now,' she said placidly." And she finished the piece. Graham told people that her dances had always existed. She only invoked them. Nor did she choose to; she was chosen. As she wrote in her "Notebooks" (1973), she had been given "lonely terrifying gifts." She was forced to ply them.

In 1938, Erick Hawkins, a dancer and choreographer fifteen years her junior, came to study at her school. Hawkins was exceedingly handsome: "We called him 'the torso,' " the composer Otto Luening said. He was also well educated; he had graduated from Harvard, in classics. Turning away from Horst, Graham launched into a tumultuous affair with Hawkins. She also hired him, breaking her company's all-female rule. (Other men joined soon afterward, including the twenty-year-old Merce Cunningham.) With that crucial change, and with her inflamed state of mind, her work took on a new look. What had once been ritual became theatre. She started using lusher music, fancier costumes and sets. Suddenly, her dances had characters, stories, dénouements. Above all, the movement changed. Contraction and release—the clenching and unclenching of the torso, based on breathing—had long been the basis of her technique. Now there was a more explosive release: wheeling turns, off-center jumps, terrific falls, bodies spiralling to the floor and then surging upward again, as the gowns—full-skirted now—whipped and snapped in the air. This is what we think of as Graham's classic style. Graham had been great before. Now she had what all artists dream of, and few get: a second period. She was great again, in a new way.

It is primarily for the dances she created in these years, the late thirties and the forties, that she is famous. Many of them—"Letter to the World," "Deaths and Entrances," "Herodiade," "Dark Meadow," "Cave of the Heart," "Errand Into the Maze," "Night Journey"—tell the same story: a woman, alone, confronts her fate, conquers her fear of it, and goes forward, into some dark territory. In the forties, Graham began consulting a Jungian analyst, Frances Wickes. Archetypes—the mother, the seductress, the goddess, the earth—now invaded her work. The rhetoric was grandiose, but the treatment subtle, textured. In "Cave of the Heart," about Jason and Medea, Medea was as appalling as she was sympathetic. In "Letter to the World," about Emily Dickinson, the poet's Ancestress, a stone-faced Puritan who turns her away from life, was not just frightening but also loving, motherly, which made her more frightening.

One constant in these works was a focus on sexual passion. There had been sexual themes in Graham's earlier dances, but in order to understand this you had to think about it. By the forties, you didn't have to think about it. In "Night Journey," her 1947 version of "Oedipus Rex," Jocasta (Graham), on meeting Oedipus (Hawkins), raised her leg high in the air and went into a violent contraction. In "Blood Memory," Graham says that that move is "the vaginal cry; it is the cry from her vagina." In response, Oedipus opened his cloak, churned his groin, and climbed on top of her. At the time of its première, this was probably the most sexually frank dance that had ever been presented on the concert stage in America. And it wasn't just Greek mythology; it was Graham's life.

The treatment varied. In "Appalachian Spring," Graham showed us happy sex; in "Night Journey" tragic sex; in "Letter to the World" sex refused. Graham never had much fear of sex. According to de Mille's biography, she arranged her deflowering, by a married man, when she was still quite young, and told her mother first. But, apparently, she did fear domination by sexual love, and she had reason to. For Hawkins's sake, she had plunged her company into turmoil. The dancers hated him, and now, at Graham's command, he became their rehearsal director, correcting them in dances they had helped choreograph,

long before he arrived. He also began to handle bookings and fund-raising. A number of dancers left. Others stayed on, loyal and resentful. Horst, too, remained for many years, although he was increasingly shut out.

Hawkins's artistic ambitions made the situation worse still. He saw himself as Graham's peer. He demanded equal billing on the roster, and all the while that he was performing with her company he was also presenting concerts of his own work. They were indifferently reviewed, but Graham stumped for him. "I will *make* the New York critics accept him," she told de Mille. The relationship, by all accounts, was a torment to both of them. He beat her up; she beat him up. He moved in with her, moved out, moved in. Once they finally married, in 1948, things got worse. But Graham was always energized by turmoil in her private life. During the Hawkins years, she routinely performed three leading roles in one night—a punishing schedule. She went onstage electrified, and often she did not warm up before performances. She seems to have welcomed the shock, like a sudden blow. The company saw her as fettered to a mediocrity, and at times she probably did, too. Hence another sex story that now surfaced in the work: sex murder. In the 1950 "Judith," the heroine, as in the Bible, seduces Holofernes and then hacks his head off. Hawkins was also in analysis with Frances Wickes, and, according to Graham, he asked Wickes "if she could make him a better dancer and choreographer than I was. Mrs. Wickes said, 'No, I cannot.'" Hawkins walked out and did not return. Soon afterward, he left Graham as well. He went on to form his own company, which had a modest place in the dance world. He died in 1994.

Graham had been through this drama before, vicariously. Ruth St. Denis, too, saw herself as a priestess; in her early years, she, too, put together a small company that had considerable success on

LIAISON; SOICHI SUNAMI/JEROME ROBBINS DANCE DIVISION, NYPL; STEVEN DAVIS

Graham, opposite page, photographed by Arnold Newman, in 1961, eight years before she retired from the stage; and, left, performing in one of her early abstract works, "Ekstasis," in 1933; Ron Protas, above, who inherited Graham's entire estate and, upon her death, in 1991, became the artistic director of her company.

the limited art-dance circuit. Then, at the age of thirty-five, she was approached by Ted Shawn, a divinity-school student turned choreographer, twelve years her junior, who wanted to be her dance partner. She fell in love, and married him. At his urging, they opened Denishawn, a combined school and touring company that she later considered the ruination of her career. Shawn took over administration and rehearsals. He also choreographed, and saw himself as St. Denis's equal. He booked Denishawn on the vaudeville circuit, with programs of his dances and hers. There ensued a sixteen-year artistic and marital battle, which the Denishawn dancers—including, for seven years, Martha Graham—witnessed daily. Graham and most of the other dancers worshipped St. Denis, and saw her as fettered to a mediocrity. The fact that Shawn was homosexual did not help the situation. Finally, in the early nineteen-thirties, Denishawn disbanded. Shawn founded an all-male troupe; St. Denis applied for welfare. She rarely performed thereafter.

Of Graham's infatuation with Hawkins, Horst said, "This is Shawn all over again, and she swore it would never happen in her life." There are differences between the two couples. Hawkins was not a vaudeville entertainer. If anything, he was artier than Graham, though, like Shawn, he was a minor talent. Also, Hawkins was not homosexual; he was bisexual. And neither union should be seen as a simple case of male opportunism. St. Denis wanted a man to take over the business side of her company, to leave her in peace with her art. So did Graham. Each woman probably thought that, because the man was so much younger and less gifted, she could control him. They both got a surprise.

Many great artists have only ten great years. Graham had twenty. Then, after Hawkins left, in 1950, she fell into a black despair. Growing older had always been a terror to her, and she

"If I had my life to live over again, I'd unlearn macramé."

• •

postponed it as long as possible. She says in "Blood Memory" that in giving her age she always subtracted fifteen years (exactly the difference between her birth date and Hawkins's). She flirted with just about every man she met—she pinched bottoms—but now, apparently, she lost her sexual confidence. She later claimed that she never had another man after Hawkins. Spinsterhood was only one problem, however. Sex had long been the engine of her work. She told her female dancers to "dance from the vagina." In the forties, that vaginal magnetism—the woman's power to attract and repel, bless or kill—was the subject of her dances. Now it seemed to desert her. She developed problems with her eyesight and with her memory, and all this was exacerbated by heavy drinking, which began, she said, with her separation from Hawkins (though both her father and one of her sisters drank). Hawkins wasn't the only one who had left. By now, Horst, too, had decamped, after twenty-two years with her. "All her props were knocked out from under her," the veteran dancer Jane Dudley says. By the sixties, Graham was rarely sober in rehearsal. According to another dancer, she would arrive hours late, after the dancers had given up and done the work without her, and then they would have to get back into their sweaty practice clothes and start again. She was usually sober for performances, though her partner had to know her steps and cue her. On her own, she would occasionally fall into the wings.

The senior dancers—Helen McGehee, Bertram Ross, David Wood—took over. They ran the school, scheduled the rehearsals, got the shows onstage. They could not, of course, create new Graham works, so Graham sketched them out, but they were often simply reworkings of her earlier pieces, especially the sex-murder dramas. In dance after dance, the men appeared wearing next to nothing; they jutted their big legs forward, and slapped the insides of their thighs. As Paul Taylor, who danced with Graham at this time, put it, she seemed to view men as "giant dildos." In "Phaedra" (1962), Hippolytus was first revealed in a raised cubicle with multiple doors. One door opened and showed his chest; another opened and showed his groin. It was like a pornographic Advent calendar. Bertram Ross, who played Hippolytus, said that he started getting obscene phone calls. Hippolytus was killed, of course, and the phallic heroes of many of Graham's dances of this period fared badly. They were blinded, beaten, castrated, murdered. It looked like revenge—obsessive and unrelenting.

Graham came to depend more heavily on the dancers. "I can't even create anymore," she told David Wood, her rehearsal director. Her most celebrated production of the fifties was "Clytemnestra" (1958), her one full-evening work, based on the Oresteia. In that piece, according to the dancers' own reports, Helen McGehee choreographed her role as Electra; Bertram Ross his double role as Agamemnon and Orestes; Yuriko her role as Iphigenia. It should be said that other choreographers ask dancers for movement suggestions. Furthermore, Graham's pieces were never really about footwork. They were as much drama as dance; she was as much the colleague of Tennessee Williams as of Doris Humphrey. Still, Williams wrote dialogue. Graham told the dancers who they were supposed to be in the piece and gave them "images." Beyond that, they had to create not just solos but duets, trios, even ensemble sections. According to the choreographer Gus Solomons, who danced for Graham in the mid-sixties, "Somebody would grunt, the first witch or whatever, and we would go," each dancer copying the one in front of him. Endings were often improvised on opening night. The dancers were thrown back on the past; they did what they knew as Graham's style. It is a tribute to the power of that style, and to the immense gifts of Graham's dancers of this period, that some of the resulting works, notably "Clytemnestra" and "Seraphic Dialogue," have survived, and look so strong. Most of the others vanished swiftly.

Still, a number of dancers who joined the company at this time have said how much they learned from Graham—how she taught them to express themselves, taught them they had selves to express. (She also, by force of circumstance, gave them an opportunity to choreograph. Over the years, Graham's troupe probably produced more choreographers than any other American dance company.)

The dancers were proud to be in her work—it was "something big to participate in," Paul Taylor said. Graham was a serious reader, especially of poetry—Dante and Rilke were two of her favorites—and mythology. She shared her books with the dancers. She opened their minds. And, ironically, it was in this period that she became truly famous. She led triumphant foreign tours; she received honorary doctorates. "Those were her golden years," David Wood says, "and for us it was like walking on razor blades."

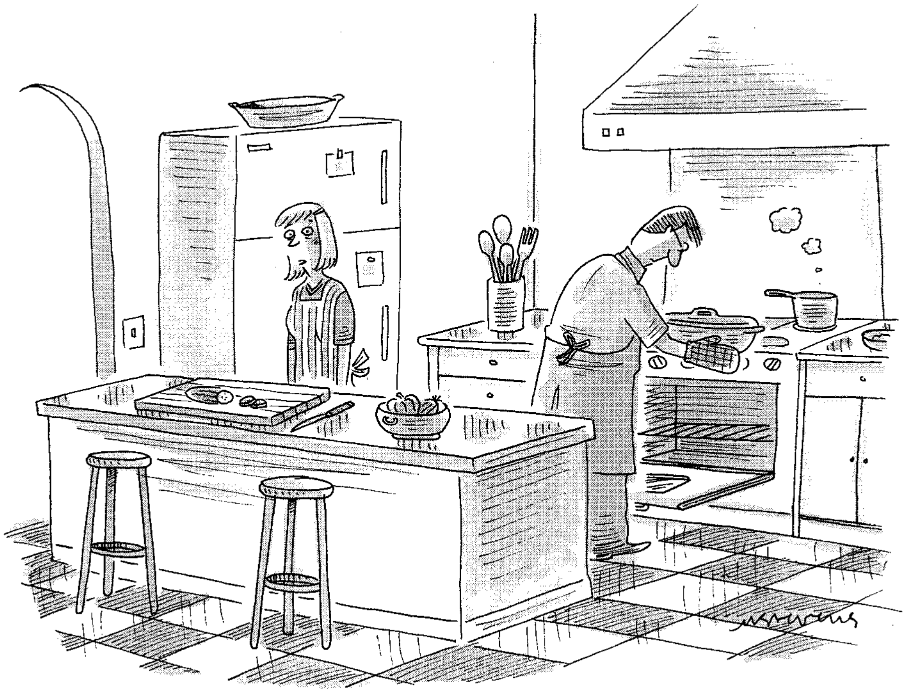
What frightened Graham most was the idea that she would have to stop dancing. She went on performing into her seventies, by which time, Gus Solomons reported to Robert Tracy, "the men would literally move her from place to place, where she'd do her three steps." Gradually, she surrendered her starring roles to the younger women, but for the most part she couldn't bear to teach them the steps. Or she forgot that she wasn't dancing the role. In "Circe" (1963), she originally intended to play the legendary seductress herself, at the age of sixty-nine; eventually, she made the role for Mary Hinkson. Hinkson told Tracy that in rehearsal, when her partner was lifting and lowering her, Graham said to him, "Get me down, get me down." The work had all been personal, and good for that reason. What could it be without her? And what was she without it? In 1969, at the age of seventy-four, she gave her last performance. It was around this time that Ron Protas arrived.

She was old, a world-famous artist. He was young, in his twenties, a law-school dropout and occasional theatre photographer. Sally Shaffer, who was Graham's assistant at that time, told me, "I remember, it was at the back door of City Center, on West Fifty-sixth Street. It was raining, and there was a man—collegiate look, brown scarf—with some wilted flowers in his hand and a camera around his neck. He begged me, could I get him in? He said he wanted to put together a beautiful book on Graham." (Protas disputes this account, though he says he cannot remember where or when he met Graham.) Soon he was around all the time. Graham couldn't stand him at first. She used to say, "Get that creep out of here." Protas was persistent, and in time Graham found that she did not mind the attentions of this young man, for she had just lost what had been her reason for living. "Without dancing, I wished to die," she wrote in "Blood Memory."

She almost did die. Between 1970 and 1972, she was largely absent from the company, as she checked in and out of Doctors Hospital, in New York, with diverticulitis and cirrhosis. During this hiatus, she also spent a year at the home of two friends, Ben Garber and William Kennedy—both interior decorators—in the suburbs north of the city. They fed her hot dinners, weaned her off alcohol, put her on a chaise longue, and told her to rest. They also arranged for her to get a face-lift, which cheered her up. But while she was in the hospital Protas was in regular attendance, and soon she was very dependent on him. "Ron saved my life," she would say. Graham was opportunistic, like many artists. She promised people a great deal, and then, if they asked for a great deal, she got rid of them. In the view of a number of Graham's dancers, Protas was just the sort of person she would have used for a while and then discarded. But, as David Wood said, "Protas was there at the end. She was tired, unable to control things." Protas sees it differently. He and Graham, he said, "attached ourselves spiritually to each other, to the outrage and anger of the rest of the dance world."

The primary charge against Protas, personally and artistically, is that he alienated Graham from her older dancers, the people whose minds and bodies were the repositories of her work. The first to go were the ones who had held the company together during Graham's absence: her dancers Bertram Ross and Mary Hinkson; her company manager, Leroy Leatherman. To some, she seemed paranoid, and Protas the supporter of her delusion. (Pinkerton guards were hired to patrol the theatre during a New York performance following Ross's departure, in case he arrived to assault Graham.) The purge continued for years. One by one, the veterans left, and Protas took their place as Graham's primary adviser.

In 1982, Protas was made an associate artistic director; in fact, he had begun handling the company's management and bookings long before. According to many people involved, he was extraordinarily unprofessional. Signed contracts were not final. Shortly before the company was to appear in a city, he would call the presenter and threaten not to come if he was not given more money or more control. He was abra-

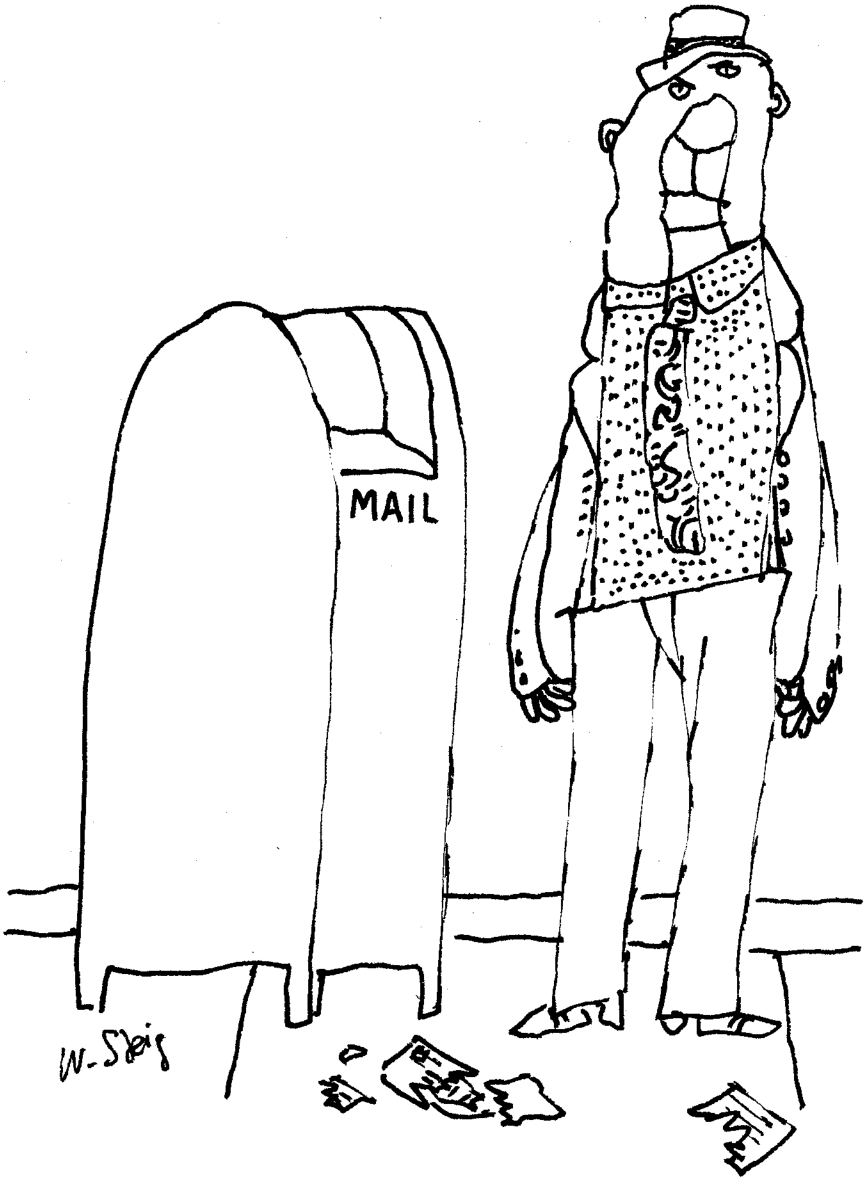


"When did our relationship move from the bedroom to the kitchen?"

sive and insulting, particularly to anyone in a position of authority regarding Graham's work—for example, the teaching staff and the senior dancers. Miki Orihara, who joined the company in 1987, said, "As a new dancer, I admired the senior dancers. You imagine that you will be like them. He tore into principal dancers. They had their own voices. How could he put them down like this, tear them down?"

Some people, even those who have broken with Protas, say that he is intelligent and creative and that he did acquire a thorough knowledge of Graham's repertory. Cynthia Parker, who was the general manager of the company in the seventies, said, "Ron made a lot of mistakes, but his heart was in the right place. He was trying so hard to make things work for Martha." If Protas was hated, that is almost always the fate of the director's favorite, and, like others in that position, he was blamed for the director's faults. Graham had a "virulent edge," as Don McDonagh, one of her biographers, put it. She slapped dancers, scratched them, threw things at them. Once she came under Protas's influence, her sins were laid at his door. And even though Protas had never been a dancer, that did not mean he could not run a dance company. A number of famous dance troupes, including Diaghilev's Ballets Russes, have been directed by non-dancers.

The problem with Protas seems to have been his volatility. "He is not an emotionally stable person, and that's to put it kindly," Diane Gray, a former star of the company, told me. Gray, as the director of the school in the eighties and an associate artistic director in the nineties, worked closely with him. He identified with Graham to an extent that others found decidedly weird. According to Peter Sparling, a leading dancer of the late period, "He would come into rehearsal with his head bowed slightly, looking up from under his brow, like her. Then he would dole out praise, then blame. And the blame would be cruel, even wicked. But he coiled in tightly before he struck, which is what Martha did." Graham had a nice, haughty way of tossing her scarf across her shoulders. Protas soon had it, too.



Change of Heart

As the years passed and Graham became weaker, Protas took over more and more. He did her makeup; he took her wherever she needed to go, and managed the occasion. He excommunicated people in her name. When Laura Shapiro, the dance critic for *Newsweek*, requested an interview with Graham, in 1990, Protas told the magazine that this would not be possible, because Graham regarded Shapiro as an "evil spirit," who "might put a curse on the new work." One day, Tobi Tobias, the dance reviewer for *New York*, was watching a class taught by Jane Dudley, who was the original Ancestress in "Letter to the World." Protas walked in and said to Dudley, "Martha hates Tobi Tobias. Get that woman out of here." (Dudley did nothing, but later she went to Graham and told her the story. Graham replied, "I owe Ron everything. He saved my life.") When Protas was thwarted, he did not forget it. "If you crossed his path," Diane Gray said, "he went out of his way to take revenge."

I met with Protas recently in the office of his press representative. He is a handsome man, probably in his late fifties. (He would not tell me his age.) In a small, hot room, he wore a wool sweater, a wool jacket, and one wool glove. The principal topic of our three-hour conversation was his devotion to Martha Graham. His eyes welled up with tears several times. "I had lost my mother," he said, "and I was bereft." Graham helped him: "I think I probably owe her my life." For decades, he recalled, there was rarely a day or night that he didn't spend with her. He took notes during her rehearsals; he videotaped her as she was coaching. "She came very close to dying, and didn't want to die. And I think she saw another way with me, someone who cared for her, and was just passionate to be with her." He went on, "She taught me so much. I didn't realize at the time what she was doing"—that she was "training me to oversee her work as she would wish it."

People were always trying to take Graham's work away from her, especially the older dancers, Protas said. "They wanted to control it." He pulled out a copy of an old company publication and showed me a photograph of him and Graham, walking across an empty stage, hand in hand. "This is a symbol," he told me. "Everyone wanted to walk with Martha like that. Everyone wanted that closeness. She didn't give it to them."

She gave it to Protas, and in return people tried to get rid of him. That was what was happening now. A "faction" of the board of trustees—Protas's lawyer calls it a "cabal"—was out to eliminate him, so that they could seize Graham's work. People had slandered him, gone through his desk, taken his papers. Whatever he did, he did for Graham, out of love. "I would run away if it was just for me," he said. "But I must protect her. She left me her name. She left me everything in her life she valued, and she trained me to protect it in the way she wished, and I will, to the death."

Everyone seems to agree on one point: Protas got Graham back to work. In 1969, when she retired from dancing, she felt that her career was over. Three years later, she returned on Protas's arm and, over the next two decades, created twenty-eight more ballets. It is debatable whether this was good for her, or for her reputation. "She had, in effect, died," de Mille writes. What came afterward was a thudding anticlimax. For there to be a dance, Graham once said, "there must be something that needs to be danced." Indeed, in most cases there had to be something that *she* needed to dance. Now that she was retired from the stage, there was nothing that had to be danced, and it was danced anyway.

Graham worked hard. She came to the studio for four hours a day, but often her words would trail off, and Linda Hodes, who was associate artistic director, would have to interpret what Martha presumably meant. She coached only sporadically. One old-timer told me, "If you danced past her and didn't fall down, she said O.K." Frequently, she couldn't recall what came when in the dances; sometimes she forgot which piece she was rehearsing. But seasons were still being staged in her name, and she had to come up with novelties. She re-staged some of her beautiful works from the thirties. (This was reportedly at Protas's urging. If so, we owe him—and the dancers, such as Yuriko and Terese Capucilli, who reset them—an enormous debt.) She cooked up dances out of classroom exercises. She brought in guest artists: Mikhail Baryshnikov, Rudolf Nureyev, Margot Fonteyn, Maya Plisetskaya. When she did make a new piece, it was often another version of an old piece, goosed up by glamour. Starting in 1975, Halston designed the costumes for much of her new repertory, swathing it in lamé. He also recostumed many of the older pieces. To see the sack of Troy, in "Clytemnestra," executed by men dressed only in backless gold shorts was to see a new take on that legendary event. The choreography, too, got sexier. "The Rite of Spring" (1984) included a forthright copulation. On the cover of the 1989 program brochure was a photograph of Oedipus, in "Night Journey," garroting Jocasta with one hand as his other hand came down on her breast. "Bristling with fleshly sensuality," the press quote plastered across the photo declared. The company seemed to be advertising snuff ballets.

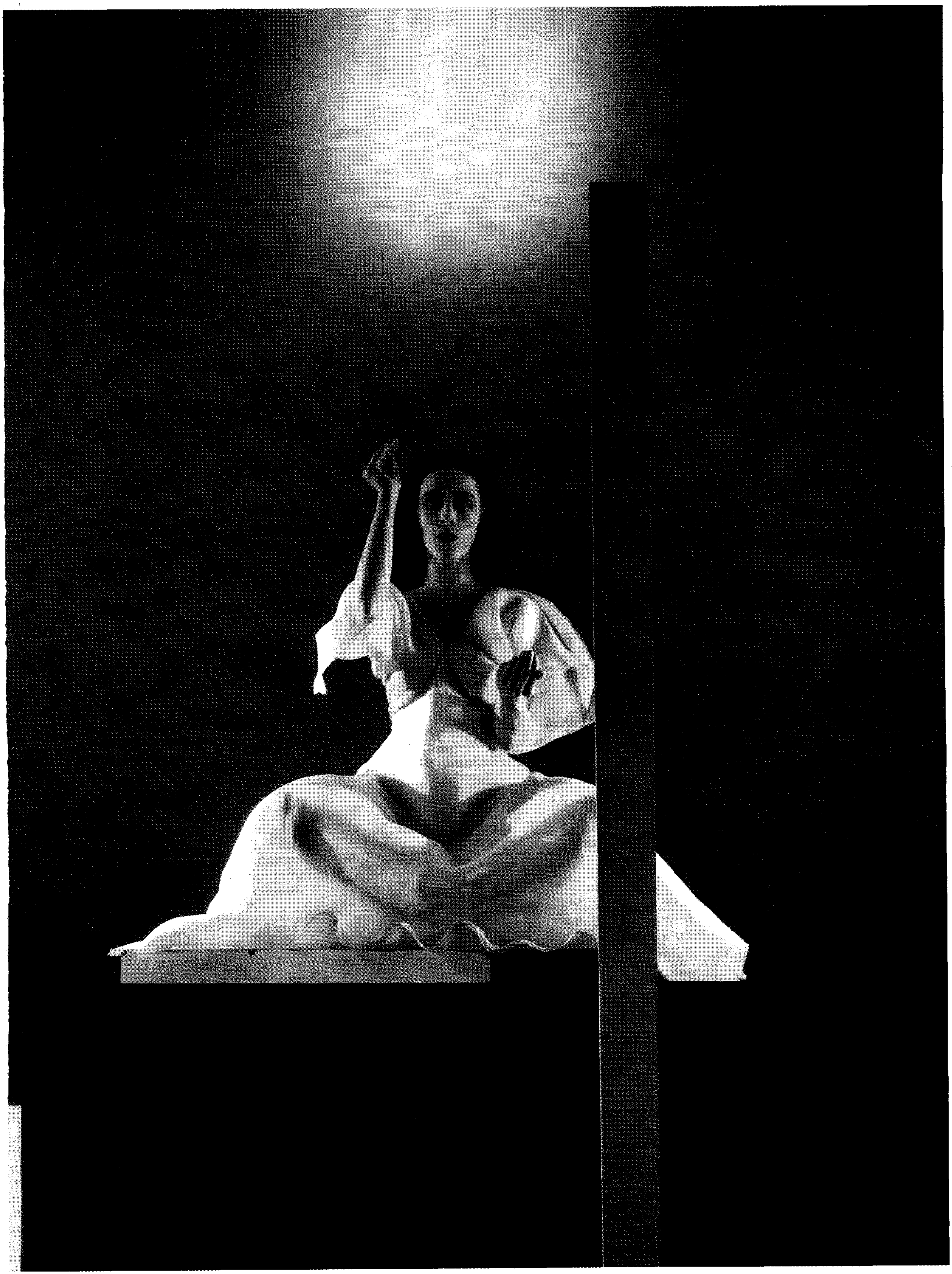
Did Graham know that the new work was bad? Perhaps, but she had labored for many years, and now she was going to have her reward. She did a Blackglama ad and got a mink. She was photographed with Madonna and the Pope. Forget the work—she had done it, long ago.

Many of the critics saw that Graham's new work was feeble, and said so. But Anna Kisselgoff, the chief dance critic of the *Times*, loyally praised it, and this was the main support of her reputation. In honor of Graham's ninety-fifth birthday, Kisselgoff interviewed her, and quoted liberally from the mythopoeic utterances to which Graham was always given. "Pointing to her chest, Miss Graham said she tells her dancers to keep in mind 'the little bird that is there,'" Kisselgoff wrote. "'The tiny creature . . . it is the heart.'" Other reviewers also exclaimed over Graham's late works and quoted her Delphic pronouncements. Such is the tribute often paid to aged female artists: how spiritual they have become! The press release for the company's first season after her death asked people to contemplate "the significance of this event, this terrible shifting and grinding of the great gears of history." De Mille, in her biography, compares Graham to a saint.

In 1991, Graham died, of cardiac arrest. Protas scattered her ashes in the mountains of New Mexico and, by the terms of her will, inherited everything she owned. Protas says that he was named as the heir in the several versions of the will that Graham filed in the last years of her life. Some of Graham's associates, however, believe that she vacillated on the question of who should inherit the rights to her work. When Graham was close to death, she summoned three of her trusted older dancers, Diane Gray, Linda Hodes, and Yuriko. (Yuriko, who came to Graham straight out of a Japanese-American internment camp during the Second World War, was one of her finest performers.) All three were still working for the company. "She said to us, 'This isn't how I would have liked it, but I'm leaving everything to Ron,'" Gray told me. According to Hodes, Graham said to them, "I've made a mistake." When Hodes asked why she didn't just correct the mistake, Graham replied that "her life was so hard, and she had come to certain conclusions." Gray recalled, "Martha said to us, 'I want you to help Ron.' We said yes, and we tried to uphold that for as long as we could." It wasn't long. Linda Hodes was gone a year after Graham's death: Protas says she quit; she says he fired her. Yuriko left after two years, citing philosophical differences with Protas. Gray hung on until 1997.

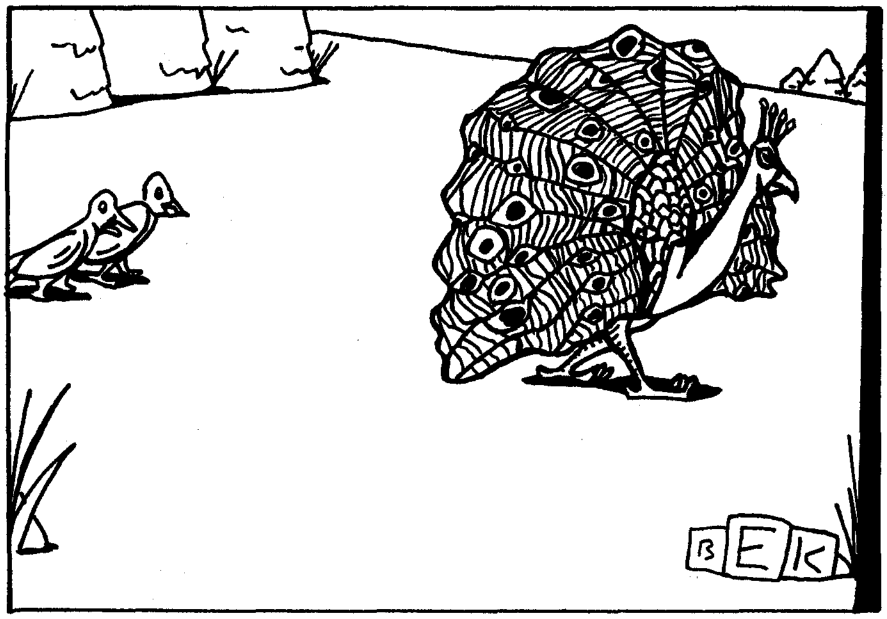
Under Protas, the dances were set and rehearsed by the associate artistic directors—in the late years, Terese Capucilli and Christine Dakin—but these

Graham met Erick Hawkins in 1938. He inspired a new kind of work, but her company suffered. Photograph by Barbara Morgan.



PERMISSION JOANNA T. STEICHEN/GEORGE EASTMAN HOUSE

Graham in "Primitive Mysteries," in 1931. She did not choose to dance, she said; she was chosen. Photograph by Edward Steichen.



"That's a plumage don't."

women did not have final authority. Protas would eventually look at a piece and issue corrections. There was often screaming and tears. The problem spread beyond the company, to dealings with presenters. When the Joffrey Ballet of Chicago was planning an Aaron Copland centennial celebration, Protas made the inclusion of "Appalachian Spring," by Graham, contingent upon the exclusion of "Rodeo," by Agnes de Mille. (He said that Graham would not have wanted a de Mille work on the program. Some people pointed out that de Mille's biography of Graham was very uncomplimentary to him.) The Joffrey complied. Other organizations simply crossed the Graham company off their list. Diane Gray recalled, "We would often leave a place, and the presenters would say, 'Never again.' " Tour dates dwindled, and the company could not afford New York seasons, which almost always lose money. From 1995 to 1999, the Graham troupe did not perform in its home city.

Meanwhile, the deficit rose. Graham was not a businesswoman; she always figured that her friends would pull her through, and they did. Many of her seasons were paid for by Bethsabee de Rothschild, of the banking family. In 1952, Lila Acheson Wallace, of *Reader's Digest*, bought Graham her company's headquarters, a pretty, old brick building, with a garden, at Sixty-third Street and Second Avenue. Doris Duke, the American Tobacco Company heiress, helped her out a number of times. In time, such friends fell away, and by the eighties the company's grant proposals were being turned down. The funders wanted to support the *next* Martha Graham. The board raised money, but never enough. As the dance writer Francis Mason, who had joined the board in 1973, told the *Times* last year, "Since 1989 we have slowly been going broke."

In 1990, the deficit reached a million four hundred thousand dollars. Such a figure is not unheard of for a dance company, but, once Graham herself was gone, it became even more difficult to raise funds. Eventually, in 1994, the company contracted for a loan of a million dollars from U.S. Trust, which, according to Protas, Doris Duke said she would help repay. When the time came to repay it, however, Duke was dead. The bank's bills were stuffed in a folder, and its calls were not returned. ("Maybe I was maladroit," Protas later told the *Times*, "but we were in a moment of rebirth.") On occasion, the company could not make payroll. Protas sometimes covered expenses out of his personal funds. He says that over the years he loaned the Graham Center three hundred thousand dollars, of which it still owes him a hundred thousand.

The funding organizations continued to hang back, and now they had another reason to do so. According to several people involved, important funders had little faith in Protas's ability to keep the company alive. "He has no business acumen and no artistic ability," Theodore Bartwink, the executive director of the Harkness Foundation for Dance, said. Money that was given for one purpose was used for another. Some funders bypassed Protas, giving grants to other organizations to benefit the Graham Center. In 1994, for example, the Lila Wallace–Reader's Digest Fund subsidized a Graham centennial at the University of Michigan, in which the company performed. Meanwhile, the center itself was nearly bankrupt, and its building was falling down. Years earlier, writing in "Blood Memory" about how nature spoke to her, Graham had said that in her studio "we have had a little shoot of plant life come up out of the floor just near the piano. . . . We accept it as a gift." Others accepted it as evidence that the floorboards were rotting. Todd Dellinger, who became the company's executive director in the late nineties, said, "There were days I spent shovelling dirt to prevent rain from flooding the basement. We were deeply, deeply in trouble."

By 1997, Protas seems to have realized that something had to be done. Late that year, he had tea at the Carlyle with Janet Eilber, a Graham star from the seventies who was then directing a small troupe in Los Angeles. He had begun looking for a new artistic director, offering the position first to Yuriko, who did not want it, and then to another veteran dancer, Takako Asakawa, who also turned him down. Now he turned to Eilber. She recalled, "He said he couldn't make any headway. People wouldn't fund him, everyone hated him." Eilber agreed to take the job, and they planned a transition period of a year and a half.

The next step was to retire the debt, which, after long hesitation, was achieved by selling the company's primary asset, its building. Benedetto Caiola, a real-estate developer whose daughter had been a student at the Graham school, bought the property for three million dollars and promised the company space in the building that he planned to construct on the site. The Graham dancers still choke up when they speak of the sale. Nevertheless, it allowed the Graham Center to pay off its debts and come up almost a million dollars in the black. The school and the company moved to temporary studios downtown.

Dellinger and Protas then spent a year working out a licensing agreement whereby Protas would permit the Graham Center to perform her works and run her school under the artistic direction of someone else. Under the new agreement, Protas would move his operations to the Martha Graham Trust, which had administered Graham's estate since 1998, but he would have an office, with an assistant, at the Graham Center. He would also remain the troupe's consultant, with a considerable fee and significant powers, including the right of approval over the choice of artistic director and over the casting of all the roles Graham made for herself—that is, the starring roles of her major pieces. Most important, if he had any objection to how a work was being performed and his concern was not addressed to his satisfaction, he could withdraw the company's license to perform it. In other words, he retained most of the rights of a director. As Graham's heir, he was in a good bargaining position. The licensing agreement was signed in July of 1999.

During the transition, Eilber was commuting from California to New York for one week each month. The plan was that she would take over in the summer of 2000, but then, it seems, Protas began having regrets about relinquishing control.

The board bears some responsibility for this crisis. During Graham's lifetime, it had acted as a rubber stamp, as is appropriate when the founding director is still alive. It consisted mostly of arts patrons and celebrities. They wrote checks and got others to do so, but they took a long time to understand that they had a problem. Then, in September of 1999, two months after signing the licensing agreement, Protas demanded that the board accept five new members, including a new chair. Desperate to keep peace, the trustees complied, but many of them did not disguise their displeasure. Soon, after a board meeting at which Protas felt he had been treated rudely, he spoke with Eilber on the phone, and said, in her words, "that if I didn't immediately fax him a letter of support I would never work in the Graham tradition again. I would have set my hair on fire for Martha Graham, but I didn't like to be threatened." She did not send a letter.

Events progressed swiftly. At a board meeting last March, Protas announced that he no longer wanted Eilber, and that he would stay on for another year to look for a replacement. At the next meeting, the trustees voted to remove him as artistic director. In May, Marvin Preston, a plain-spoken Midwesterner who had become executive director just two months before, when Dellinger quit, outlined the financial situation for the board: by the end of the spring tour, the company would be five hundred thousand dollars in debt, with no assets to borrow against. In response, the board took the action that so jolted the dance world: it voted to suspend operations of the Graham Center and to cancel all future engagements. The following day, Protas faxed the trustees a letter saying that he was revoking the licensing agreement. At the next meeting, in June, the trustees voted him off the board.

During this period, ten trustees resigned, some out of sympathy with Protas, others out of frustration with the whole business. One of them, Princess Moune Souvanna-Phouma, of Laos, complained to me of the hostility to Protas—and to any trustees who sided with him. Celeste Cheatham, who also resigned, says that Protas's enemies on the board "ignored anyone who was on Ron's side." But most of Protas's allies, like the Princess, had been recently appointed, by him, or were celebrities, such as Betty Ford, Vanessa Redgrave, and Gregory Peck, and they did not attend meetings regularly. (If they had, Protas might still be running the company.) The trustees who remain are old-timers, for the most part, and they are not friends of Ron Protas.

Protas believes that the board did not have to suspend operations, and that it did so mainly to force him out. Marvin Preston has a competing theory, that Protas may have foreseen the closure all along. When Preston started working with the company, he said, he looked at

"I consider myself to be a counterproductive member of society."

the figures, the contract, the leases, and asked himself, "What am I looking at? I'm looking at an organization that has been planned to stop at the end of April"—just before Protas was to have ceded the directorship.

In any case, the company was closed. Nor were many other people allowed to perform Graham's works. Frostburg State University, in Maryland, had long been planning a Graham retreat for students in the summer of 2000. When Protas discovered that several of the teachers involved had joined the company and more than fifty veterans in signing a public letter protesting his behavior, he demanded that Barry Fischer, the director of the retreat, fire them. Fischer refused, whereupon Protas revoked Frostburg's right to perform any Graham works, teach anything called Graham technique, or use Graham's name in its publicity. Fischer hastily put together a different program. Other people, unwilling to deal with Protas, have also dropped Graham from their schedules. The former Graham dancer Peter Sparling, who now teaches in the dance department at the University of Michigan, and who has his own company, in Ann Arbor, told me that his troupe is no longer performing Graham pieces, and that he has ceased teaching Graham technique.

If this trend continues, it will mean the elimination of Graham from the world's dance repertory. Protas claims that he can keep Graham's work alive by licensing it to other companies. (This would also benefit him. Licensing fees go to Protas, not to the Graham Center.) But most of the organizations to which Protas has licensed Graham's repertory are classical-ballet companies. Keith Roberts, who performed Graham's work at American Ballet Theatre, told the *Times* that asking a ballet dancer to do Graham was "like asking a modern dancer to do 'Sleeping Beauty.'" The dancers' protest letter claimed that, if other troupes perform Graham's works without a mother company existing to set standards, "the aesthetic values she devoted her life to will be gravely and forever diminished." Throughout this dispute, Anna Kisselgoff, of the *Times*, has supported Protas, as she formerly supported Graham. In October, she wrote that, although operations had been suspended, "luckily, Graham's works are being staged by other troupes." This came as a direct rebuttal to the dancers' letter.

In part, this is a story about preservation. Dance differs from all other arts in that it is not created as a document. Literature exists as text, music as a score, but dance is created on living bodies and survives only as long as those bodies remember it and pass it on to others. This is one reason that choreographers, including Graham (and Merce Cunningham, who is eighty-one), go on working as long as they do. If they quit, chances are that their company will fold, in which case their works, ceasing to be performed, will die. The classics of Western literature date from the seventh century B.C. The classics of Western dance date from the nineteenth century A.D. Strange as it may seem to us that Graham didn't care if her works died, she was simply ratifying the historical law of dance. Of Graham's hundred and eighty pieces, only about forty are extant or reconstructible. (The others died because they went out of repertory.) That's a lot. Of the seventy-five ballets of Marius Petipa, the foremost choreographer of the nineteenth century—or so we think, since most of his colleagues' works have vanished—about four survive, counting fragments.

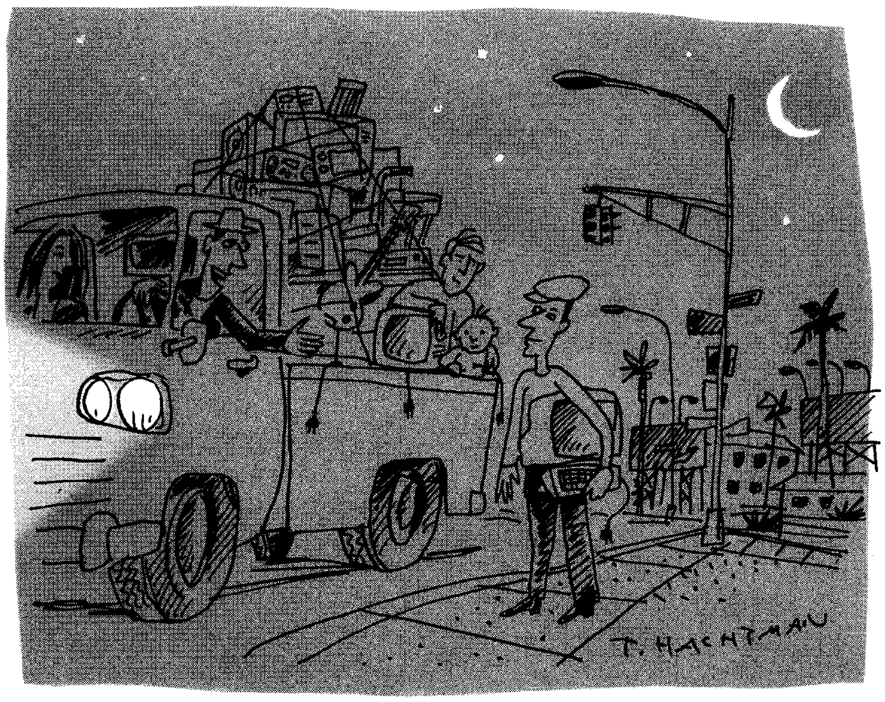
Only in recent years, partly because of Graham and George Balanchine, has preservation become an issue in dance. Systems of dance notation, whereby the movement is written down in symbols (as in music notation), have been refined. Film and videotape have been put into service. But no one pretends that these recordings document the phrasing or the spirit that the choreographer actually intended. A videotape is a record of one performance, possibly a bad performance, and, more important, one seen from the outside. Even if it shows what a dancer pulled out of herself for that dance, it cannot teach a new dancer what to pull out of herself. Notation is probably more helpful, but the key in dances set from notation is coaching. Someone must stand there—someone whom the dancer respects—and say, "This is how you accent this phrase," "This is how the arc of energy is released," "This moment is the big moment." When re-stagings of pieces by dead choreographers actually work—witness the Kennedy Center's recent "Balanchine Celebration," with performances of his works by San Francisco Ballet, Miami City Ballet, Pennsylvania Ballet, the Suzanne Farrell Ballet, the Joffrey Ballet, and the Bolshoi Ballet—they always have this personal note. That is because they were coached by people who danced those roles, and who have confidence, passion, and pride of ownership that they can communicate to the new cast.

Even if a dance survives in repertory and is well coached, it will change. The coaches will change it, according to their own idiosyncracies, and they will adjust it, in keeping with shifts in taste, to prevent it from looking dated. It can be argued that Graham's dances, because of the aura of holiness that surrounds her, have not been changed *enough*. They were born of a different, more histrionic period in the theatre. I have seen people at City Center giggling as She of the Ground, in "Dark Meadow" (1946), stalked across the stage with a tree pinned to her head. Ballet directors are more pragmatic. "The Sleeping Beauty," probably the world's most honored ballet, has been revised to the point where Marius Petipa, who created it, in 1890, probably would not recognize it, and it is the best preserved of the "classics." No one sees this as a problem. The problem is only that there is no original text. A modern-minded theatre director can set "Hamlet" in a public lavatory, and the next director will still have Shakespeare's text to return to, so that he can make his own decisions. A stager of "The Sleeping Beauty" knows only the productions he has seen. Drama is a wheel, with spokes (the productions) radiating from the hub (the text). Dance is a chain, with each link attached only to the last.

In an effort to bypass this rule, the George Balanchine Foundation is now videotaping Balanchine's original dancers coaching his ballets, so as to have a record of what he wanted—a hub. The

Library of Congress is trying similar methods with Graham: "layered films," including a performance, a rehearsal, and whatever documentation there is of Graham's coaching, plus the original dancers discussing what she wanted. These new techniques are expensive, however, and we don't know if they will work. Today, the old method of hand-to-hand transmission is still in force, and by that method a dance will survive, roughly the way the choreographer set it, for, at most, twenty years after his or her death. This sounds terrible, but twenty years is long enough for the piece to imprint itself on the memory of future choreographers, so that the old dances will inform the new.

What, then, is the need of a mother company in Graham's case? Her best works are more than half a century old, and she had stopped coaching many of them. In addition, Janet Eilber, who may yet become the company's artistic director, said, "Bodies are different today from what they were in the forties. The technique is different, far more advanced. And people are different." She also believes that some of Graham's dances could benefit from new productions. (She is hoping that Robert Wilson will re-stage "Clytemnestra.") Nevertheless, she thinks there is still a chance to recoach those works in a way that could update them while remaining true to Graham's spirit. Eilber is helping to make the layered films at the Library of Congress, and she says that what is being done there must be done at the company. "The older dancers have essential knowledge, which the company has now been cut off from for thirty years"—since Protas arrived. The mother company is the place where the old meet and teach the young. That is what has been eliminated, and, if the company remains closed, there will be no place where it can ever occur.



"Get in, Tom—we're goin' to Oklahoma. Hear tell they got 'lectricity."

The Graham Center's board of trustees does not intend this to happen, and it may have its way. Ever since Graham's death, it has been assumed that the rights to her dances depended on her will. Last summer, however, the office of the New York Attorney General contacted both Protas and the board to suggest that they bring a mediator into the dispute, and it pointed out that the ownership of the dances might be in question. In Graham's time, intellectual-property law stipulated that in order for a dance to be copyrighted as someone's property it had to be "fixed"—that is, notated or filmed, with the proper copyright notices. This was not done with most of Graham's dances, which means that they may be in the public domain. What's more, Dale Cendali, the attorney for the Graham Center, said, "The work-for-hire doctrine holds that if Graham created those dances as an employee of the Graham Center they belong to the center, not to her. And she was an employee. She drew a salary, had taxes withheld." Michael Quinn, Protas's attorney, told the Washington *Post* that this challenge was a "last, desperate act of a hopeless crew that tried to hijack Martha's legacy." Protas, Quinn claims, "owns everything." He added, "It's out-and-out theft for anyone to claim otherwise." (This challenge could have huge repercussions for the dance world. How many of Balanchine's works were properly copyrighted?) Moreover, the Attorney General's office is now investigating Protas for possible violation of fiduciary interest in his dealings with the company, and it is seeking permission from a federal judge to intervene in the trademark issue on the center's behalf.

The Graham school reopened on January 16th. Hugh Hardy, the celebrated architect who recently renovated Radio City Music Hall, is designing the Graham Center's studios in the new building on East Sixty-third Street. According to Marvin Preston, the company will be dancing again this year, with or without Ron Protas's permission. Shortly before the school reopened, Protas tried to obtain a restraining order to prevent it from using Graham's name. The order was denied. Now he has filed suit against the center—together with several of the trustees and past and present directors of the center—alleging trademark infringement, breach of contract, defamation, verbal abuse, invasion of privacy, theft, and "the hurling of heavy objects by defendant Dellinger at Mr. Protas." (Todd Dellinger says, "They were the bronze door handles from Studio 1, and I didn't throw them at him. I put them down on his desk.") What will happen is an open question. In any case, the ghost of Martha Graham, who thrived on turmoil, will not be displeased. "Right now," one of her longtime dancers said, "she's looking down and smiling on the mess she made." ♦

FICTION

WHAT IS REMEMBERED

BY ALICE MUNRO

In a hotel room in Vancouver, Meriel as a young woman is putting on her short white summer gloves. She wears a beige linen dress and a flimsy white scarf over her hair. Dark hair, at that time. She smiles, because she has remembered something that Queen Sirikit of Thailand said, or was quoted as saying, in a magazine. A quote within a quote—something Queen Sirikit said that Balmain had said.

"Balmain taught me everything. He said, 'Always wear white gloves. It's best.' "

It's best. Meriel smiles at that, not as you'd smile at a joke but as at an endearing absurdity. Her gloved hands look formal but helpless. A kitten's paws.

Pierre asks why she's smiling, and she says, "Nothing," then tells him.

He says, "Who is Balmain?"

They were getting ready to go to a funeral. They had come over on the ferry last night, from their home on Vancouver Island, to be sure of being on time for the morning ceremony. It was the first time they'd stayed in a hotel since their wedding night. When they went on a holiday now, it was always with their two children, and they looked for inexpensive motels that catered to families.

This was only the second funeral they had been to as a married couple. Pierre's father was dead, and Meriel's mother was dead, but these deaths had happened before Pierre and Meriel met. Last year, a teacher at Pierre's school died suddenly, and there was a fine service, with the schoolboy choir and the sixteenth-century words for the Burial of the Dead. The man had been in his mid-sixties, and his death seemed to Meriel and Pierre only a little surprising and hardly sad. It did not make much difference, as they saw it, whether you died at sixty-five or seventy-five or eighty-five.

The funeral today was another matter. It was Jonas who was being buried. Pierre's best friend for years and Pierre's age—twenty-nine. They had grown up together, in West Vancouver—they could remember it before the Lions Gate Bridge was built, when it seemed like a small town. Their parents were friends. When the boys were eleven or twelve years old they had built a rowboat and launched it at Dundarave Pier. At the university, they had parted company for a while—Jonas was studying to be an engineer, while Pierre was enrolled in classics, and the arts students and the engineering students traditionally despised each other. But, in the years since then, the friendship had to some extent been revived. Jonas, who was not married, had come to visit Pierre and Meriel, and sometimes stayed with them for a week at a time.

What had happened in their lives surprised them, and they would joke about it. Jonas was the one whose choice of profession had seemed so reassuring to his parents, and had roused a muted envy in Pierre's parents, yet it was Pierre who had married and got a teaching job and taken on ordinary responsibilities, while Jonas, after university, had never settled down with a girl or a job. He was always on some sort of probation that did not end up in a firm attachment to any company, and the girls—at least to hear him tell it—were always on some sort of probation with him. His last engineering job was in the northern part of the province, and he stayed on there after either quitting or getting fired. Employment terminated by mutual consent, he wrote to Pierre, adding that he was living at the hotel, where all the high-class people lived, and might get a job on a logging crew. He was also learning to fly a plane, and thinking of becoming a bush pilot. He promised to visit when present financial complications were worked out.

Meriel had hoped that wouldn't happen. Jonas slept on the living-room couch and in the morning threw the covers on the floor for her to pick up. He kept Pierre awake half the night, talking about things that had happened when they were teen-agers, or even younger. His name for Pierre was "Piss-hair," a nickname from those years, and he referred to other old friends as Stinkpool and Doc and Buster, never by the names Meriel had always heard—Stan and Don and Rick. He recalled with a gruff pedantry the details of incidents that Meriel did not think so remarkable or funny (the bag of dog shit set on fire on the teacher's front steps, the badgering of the old man who offered boys a nickel to pull down their pants) and grew irritated if the conversation turned to the present.

When she had to tell Pierre that Jonas was dead she was apologetic, shaken. Apologetic because she hadn't liked him and shaken because he was the first person they knew well, in their own age group, to have died. But Pierre did not seem to be surprised or particularly stricken.

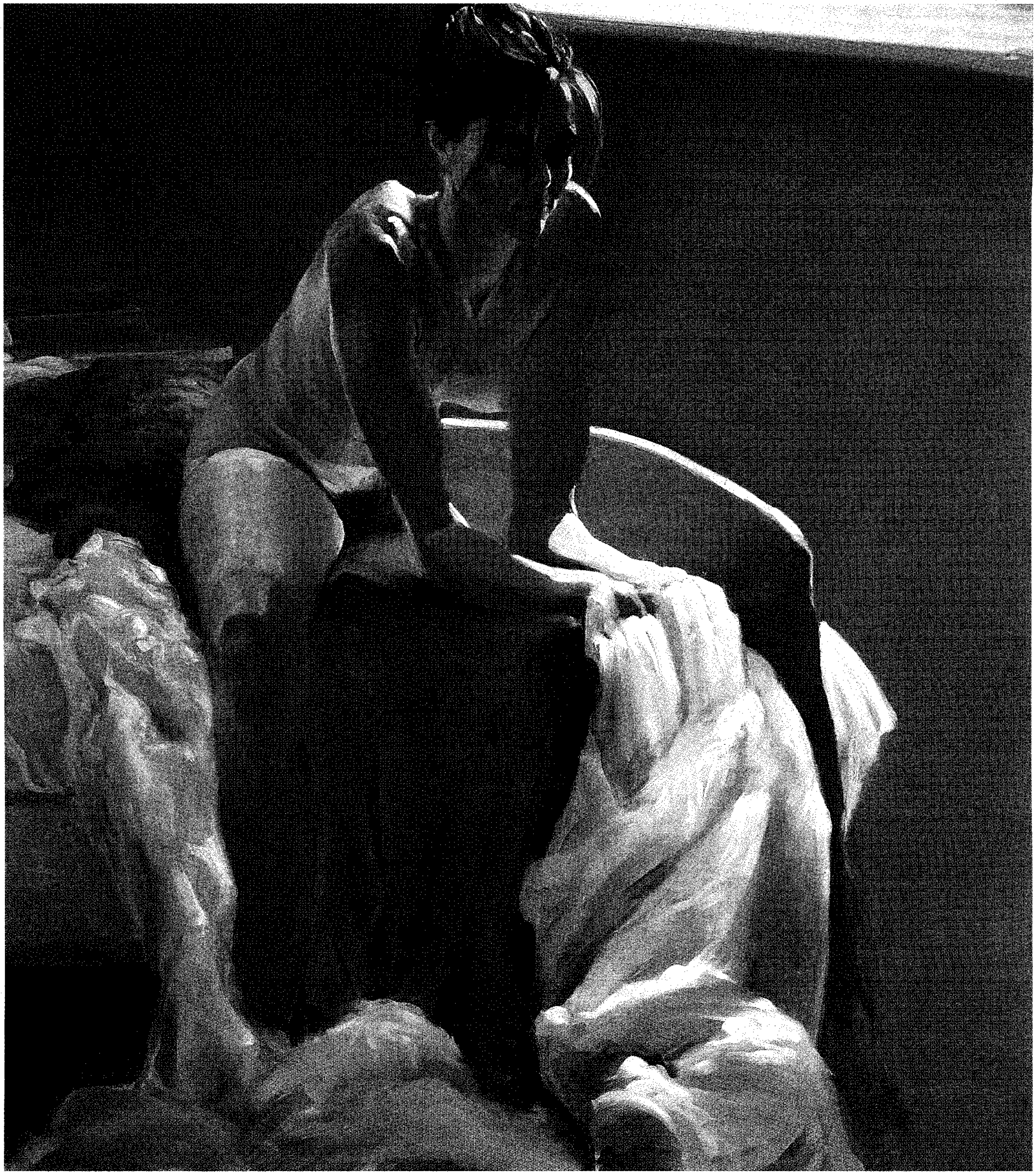
"Suicide," he said.

She said no, an accident. He was riding a motorcycle, after dark, on gravel, and he went off the road. Somebody found him, or was with him, help was at hand, but he died within an hour. His injuries were mortal.

That was what his mother had said, on the phone. She had sounded so quickly resigned, so unsurprised. As Pierre had when he said "Suicide."

After that, Pierre and Meriel had hardly spoken about the death itself, just about the funeral, the hotel room, the need for an all-night sitter. His suit to be cleaned, a white shirt obtained. It was Meriel who made the arrangements, and Pierre kept checking up on her in an irritable, husbandly way. She understood that he wished her to be controlled and matter-of-fact, as he was, and not to lay claim to any sorrow that—he would be sure—she could not really feel. She had asked him why he had said "Suicide,"

ERIC FISCHL "REFLECTION II (WHO?)," 1995/MARY BOONE GALLERY



and he had told her, "That's just what came into my head." She felt his evasion to be some sort of warning, or even a rebuke. As if he suspected her of deriving from this death—or from their proximity to this death—a feeling that was discreditable and self-centered. A morbid, preening excitement.

Young husbands were stern, in those days. Just a short time before, they had been suitors, almost figures of fun, knock-kneed and desperate in their sexual agonies. Now, bedded down, they turned resolute and disapproving. Off to work every morning, clean shaven, youthful necks in knotted ties, days spent in unknown labors, home again at suppertime to take a critical glance at the evening meal and to shake out the newspaper, hold it up between themselves and the muddle of the kitchen, the ailments and emotions, the babies. What a lot they had to learn, so quickly. How to kowtow to bosses and how to manage wives. How to be authoritative about mortgages, retaining walls, lawn grass, drains, politics, as well as about the jobs that would have to maintain their families for the next quarter of a century. It was the women, then, who could slip back—during the daytime hours, and always allowing for the stunning responsibility that had been landed on them, in the matter of the children—into a kind of second adolescence. A lightening of spirits when the husbands departed. Dreamy rebellion, subversive get-togethers, laughing fits that were a throwback to high school, mushrooming between the walls that the husband was paying for, in the hours when he wasn't there.

After the funeral, some people had been invited back to Jonas's parents' house in Dundarave. The rhododendron hedge was in bloom, all red and pink and purple. Jonas's father was complimented on the garden.

"Well, I don't know," he said. "We had to get it in shape in a bit of a hurry."

Jonas's mother said, "This isn't a real lunch, I'm afraid. Just a pickup." Most people were drinking sherry, though some of the men had whiskey. Food was set out on the extended dining-room table—salmon mousse and crackers, mushroom tarts, sausage rolls, a light lemon cake and cut-up fruit and pressed-almond cookies, as well as shrimp and ham and cucumber-and-avocado sandwiches. Pierre heaped everything onto his small china plate and Meriel heard his mother say to him, "You know, you could always come back for a second helping."

She didn't live in West Vancouver anymore but had come in from White Rock for the funeral. And she wasn't quite confident about a direct reprimand, now that Pierre was a teacher and a married man.

"Or didn't you think there'd be any left?" she said.

Pierre said carelessly, "Maybe not of what I wanted."

His mother spoke to Meriel.

"What a nice dress."

"Yes, but look," said Meriel, smoothing down the wrinkles that had formed while she sat through the service.

"That's the trouble," Pierre's mother said.

"What's the trouble?" said Jonas's mother brightly, sliding some tarts onto the warming dish.

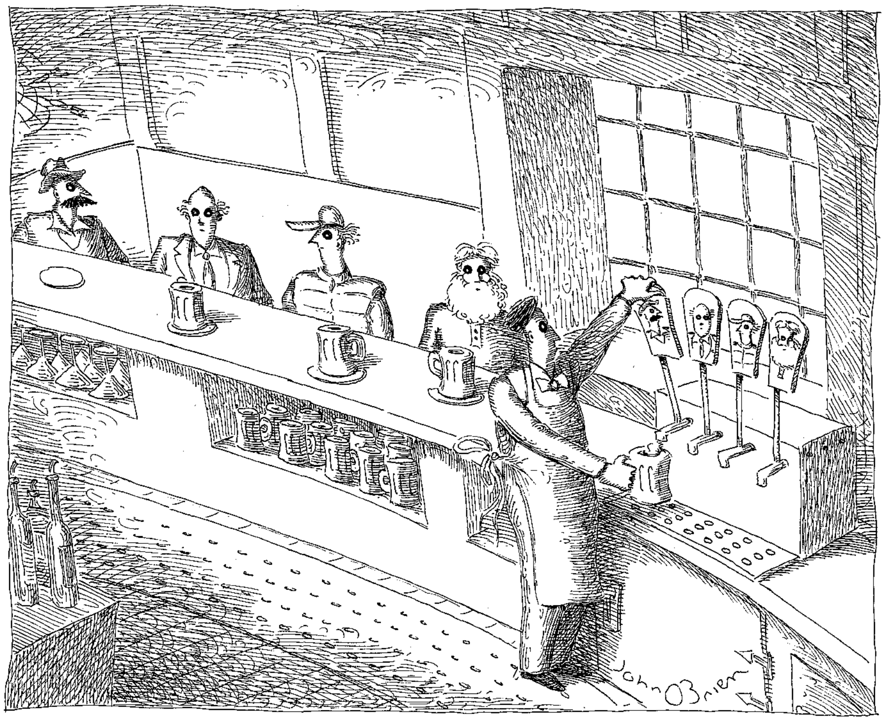
"That's the trouble with linen," said Pierre's mother. "Meriel was just saying how her dress had wrinkled up"—she did not say, "during the funeral service"—"and I was saying, that's the trouble with linen."

Jonas's mother might not have been listening. Looking across the room, she said, "That's the doctor who looked after him. He flew down from Smithers in his own plane. Really, we thought that was so good of him."

Pierre's mother said, "That's quite an undertaking."

"Yes. Well. I suppose he gets around that way, to attend to people in the bush."

The man they were talking about was speaking to Pierre. He was not wearing a suit, though he had a decent jacket on, and a shirt and tie.



"I suppose he would," said Pierre's mother, and Jonas's mother said, "Yes," and Meriel felt as if something had been settled between them.

She looked down at the table napkins, which were folded in quarters. They were not as big as dinner napkins or as small as cocktail napkins. They were set in overlapping rows, so that a corner of each napkin (the corner embroidered with a tiny blue or pink or yellow flower) overlapped the folded corner of its neighbor. No two napkins embroidered with the same color of flower were touching each other. Nobody had disturbed them, or if they had—for she did see a few people around the room holding napkins—they had picked up napkins from the end of the row in a careful way, and this order had been maintained.

At the funeral service, the minister had compared Jonas's life on earth to the life of a baby in the womb. The baby, he said, knows nothing of any other existence and inhabits its warm, dark, watery cave with not an inkling of the great, bright world it will soon be thrust into. And we on earth have an inkling, but are really quite unable to imagine the light that we will enter, after we have survived the travail of death. If the baby could somehow be informed of what would happen to it in the near future, would it not be incredulous as well as afraid? And so are we, most of the time, but we should not be, for we have been given assurance. Even so, our blind brains cannot imagine, cannot conceive of, what we will pass into. The baby is lapped in its ignorance, in the faith of its dumb, helpless being. And we who are not entirely ignorant or entirely knowing must take care to wrap ourselves in our faith, in the word of our Lord.

Meriel looked at the minister, who stood in the hall doorway with a glass of sherry in his hand, listening to a vivacious woman with blond, puffed hair. They didn't seem to be talking about the pangs of death and the light ahead. What would he do if she walked over and tackled him on that subject?

Nobody would have the heart to. Or the bad manners.

Instead, she looked at Pierre and the bush doctor. Pierre was talking with a boyish liveliness she didn't often see in him these days. She occupied herself by pretending that she was seeing him for the first time now. His curly, short-cropped, very dark hair receding at the temples, baring the smooth, gold-tinged ivory skin. His wide, sharp shoulders and long, fine limbs and nicely shaped, rather small skull. He smiled enchantingly but never to charm, and seemed to distrust smiling altogether since he had become a teacher of boys. Faint lines of permanent fret were set in his forehead.

She thought of a teachers' party—more than a year ago—when she and he had found themselves, at opposite sides of the room, left out of the nearby conversations. She had circled the room and got close to him without his noticing, and then she began to talk to him as if she were a discreetly flirtatious stranger. He smiled as he was smiling now—but with a difference, as was natural when talking to an ensnaring woman—and he took up the charade. They exchanged charged looks and vapid speeches until they both broke down laughing. Someone came up to them and told them that married jokes were not allowed.

"What makes you think we're really married?" said Pierre, whose behavior at such parties was usually so circumspect.

She crossed the room to him now with no such foolishness in mind. She had to remind him that they must soon go their separate ways. He was driving to Horseshoe Bay to catch the next ferry, and she would have to get across the North Shore to Lynn Valley, by bus. She had arranged to take this chance to visit a woman her dead mother had loved and admired, and in fact had named her for, and whom Meriel had always called Aunt, though they were not related by blood. Aunt Muriel. (It was when Meriel went away to college that she had changed the spelling.) This old woman was living in a nursing home in Lynn Valley, and Meriel had not visited her for over a year. It took too much time to get there, on their infrequent family trips to Vancouver, and the children were upset by the atmosphere of the nursing home and by the looks of the people who lived there. So was Pierre, though he did not like to say so. Instead, he asked what relation this person was to Meriel, anyway.

It's not as if she was a real aunt.

So now Meriel was going to see her alone. She had said that she would feel

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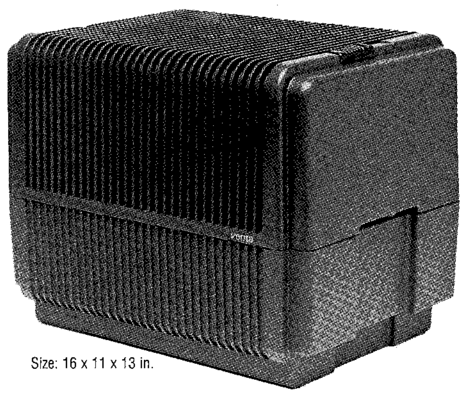

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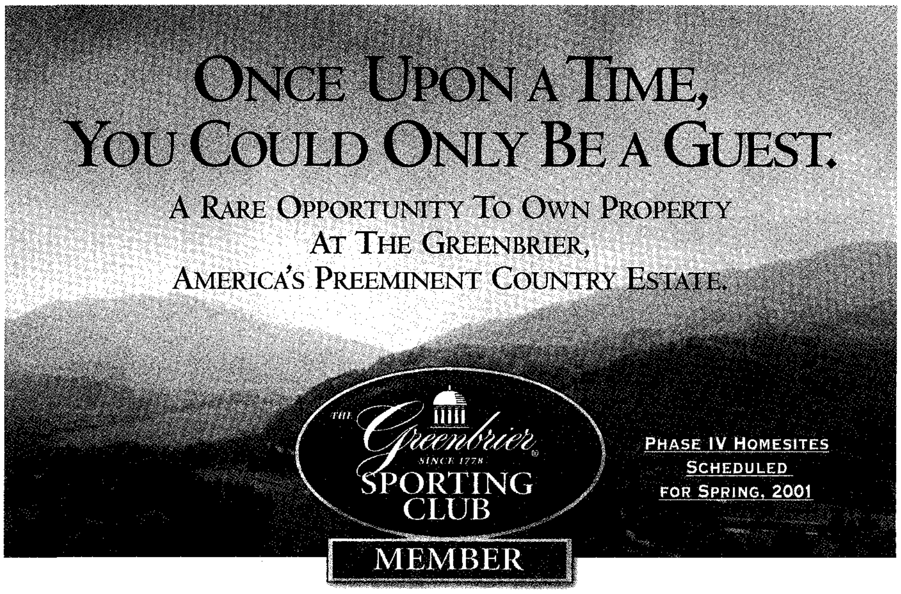

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guilty if she didn't go when she had the chance. Also, though she didn't say so, she was looking forward to the time that this would give her to herself.

"Maybe I could drive you," Pierre said. "God knows how long you'll have to wait for the bus."

"You can't," she said. "You'd miss the ferry." She reminded him of their arrangement with the sitter. He said, "You're right."

The man he'd been talking to—the doctor—had not had any choice but to listen to this conversation and said unexpectedly, "Let me drive you."

"I thought you came here in an airplane," said Meriel, just as Pierre said, "This is my wife, I'm sorry. Meriel."

The doctor told her a name which she hardly heard.

"It's not so easy landing a plane on Hollyburn Mountain," he said. "So I left it at the airport and rented a car."

Some slight forcing of courtesy, on his part, made Meriel think that she had sounded obnoxious. She was often either too bold or too shy.

"Would that really be O.K.?" Pierre said. "Do you have time?"

The doctor looked directly at Meriel. This was not a disagreeable look—it was not aggressive or sly, it was not appraising. But it was not socially deferential, either.

He said, "Of course."

So it was agreed that this was how it would be. They would start saying their goodbyes now, and Pierre would leave for the ferry, and Asher, as his name was—or Dr. Asher—would drive Meriel to Lynn Valley.

What Meriel planned to do after that was to visit with Aunt Muriel—possibly even sit through supper with her—then catch the bus from Lynn Valley to the downtown bus depot (buses to town were relatively frequent) and board the late-evening bus, which would take her to the ferry, and home.

The nursing home was called Princess Manor. It was a one-story building with extended wings, covered in pinkish-brown stucco. The street was busy, and there were no grounds to speak of, no hedges or fences to shut out noise or protect the scraps of lawn. On one side, there was a Gospel Hall with a joke of a steeple, on the other a gas station.

"The word 'manor' doesn't mean anything at all anymore, does it?" said Meriel. "It doesn't even mean there's an upstairs. It just means that you're supposed to think that a place is something it doesn't even pretend to be."

The doctor said nothing—perhaps what she had said didn't make any sense to him. Or wasn't worth saying even if it did. All the way from Dundarave, she had listened to herself talking and been dismayed. It wasn't so much that she was prattling, saying just anything that came into her head; rather, that she was trying to express things that seemed to her interesting, or that might have been interesting if she could get them into shape. But they probably sounded pretentious, if not insane, rattled off in the way she was doing. She must seem like one of those women who are determined not to have an ordinary conversation but a *real* one. And even though she knew that nothing was working, that her talk must seem to him an imposition, she was unable to stop herself.

She didn't know what had started this. Unease, simply because she so seldom talked to a stranger nowadays? The oddity of riding alone in a car with a man who wasn't her husband?

She had even asked, rashly, what he thought of Pierre's notion that the motorcycle accident was suicide.

"You could float that idea around about any number of violent accidents," he had said.

"Don't bother pulling into the drive," she said. "I can get out here." So embarrassed, so eager was she to get away from him and his barely polite indifference that she put her hand on the door handle, as if to open it, while they were still moving along the street.

"I was planning to park," he said, turning in anyway. "I wasn't going to leave you stranded."

She said, "I might be quite a while."

"That's all right. I can wait. Or I could come in and look around. If you wouldn't mind that."

She was about to say that nursing homes can be dreary and unnerving. Then she remembered that he was a doctor and would see nothing here that he had not seen before. And something in the way he had said "if you wouldn't mind that"—some mild formality, but also an uncertainty in his voice—astonished her. It seemed that he was making an offering of his time and his presence that had little to do with courtesy but, rather, something to do with herself. It was an offer made with a touch of frank humility, but it was not a plea. If she had said that she would really rather not take up any more of his time, he would not have tried any further persuasion; he would have said goodbye with an even courtesy and driven away.

As it was, they got out of the car and walked side by side across the parking lot, toward the front entrance.

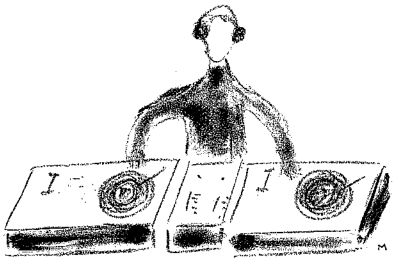
Several old or disabled people were sitting out on a square of pavement that had a few furry-looking shrubs and pots of petunias around it to suggest a garden patio. Aunt Muriel was not among them, but Meriel found herself bestowing greetings. Every step she took, she felt as if there were a wire that lit up, a bright message travelling from her heels to the top of her skull.

(When she asked him later "Why did you come in there with me?" he said, "Because I didn't want to lose sight of you.")

Aunt Muriel was sitting by herself, in a wheelchair, in the dim corridor just outside her own bedroom door. She was fat and glimmering—but that was because of being swathed in an asbestos apron so she could smoke a cigarette. Meriel believed that when she had said goodbye to her, months and seasons ago, she had been sitting in the same chair in the same spot—though without the asbestos apron, which must accord with some new rule, or reflect some further decline. Very likely, she sat here every day beside the fixed ashtray filled with sand, looking at the liverish painted wall (they had painted it pink or mauve, but it looked liverish, the corridor being so dim) with the bracket shelf on it supporting a spill of fake ivy.

"Meriel? I thought it was you," Muriel said. "I could tell by your steps. I could tell by your breathing. My cataracts have got quite vicious. All I can see is blobs."

"It's me, all right. How are you?" Meriel kissed her temple. "Why aren't you out in the sunshine?"



"I'm not fond of sunshine," the old woman said. "I have to think of my complexion."

She might have been joking, but it was perhaps the truth. Her pale face and hands were covered with large spots—dead-white spots that caught what light there was here, turning silvery. She had been a true blonde, pink-faced, lean, with straight, well-cut hair that had gone white in her thirties. Now the hair was ragged, mussed from being rubbed into pillows, and the lobes of her ears hung out of it like flat teats. And she used to wear little diamonds in her ears—where had they gone? Diamonds in her ears, real gold chains, real pearls, silk shirts of unusual colors—amber, aubergine—and beautiful narrow shoes.

She smelled of hospital powder and the licorice drops she sucked all day between the rationed cigarettes.

"We need some chairs," she said. She leaned forward, waved the cigarette hand in the air, tried to whistle. "Service, please. Chairs."

The doctor said, "I'll find some."

The old woman and the young one were left alone.

"What's your husband's name?"

"Pierre."

"And you have the two children, don't you? Jane and David?"

"That's right. But the man who's with me—"

"Ah, no. That's not your husband."

Aunt Muriel belonged to Meriel's grandmother's generation, rather than her mother's. She had been Meriel's mother's art teacher at school, first an inspiration, then an ally, then a friend. She had painted large abstract pictures, one of which—a present to Meriel's mother—had hung in the back hall of the house where Meriel grew up and been moved to the dining room whenever the artist came to visit. Its colors were murky—dark reds and browns (Meriel's father called it "Manure Pile on Fire")—but Aunt Muriel's spirit seemed always bright and dauntless. She had lived in Vancouver when she was young, before she came to teach in this town in the interior. She had been friends with artists whose names were now in the papers. She longed to go back there and eventually did, to live with and manage

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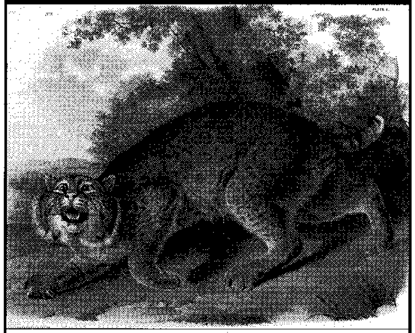

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the affairs of a rich old couple who were friends and patrons of artists. She was left out in the cold when they died. She lived on her pension, took up watercolors because she could not afford oils, starved herself (Meriel's mother suspected) so that she could take Meriel out to lunch—Meriel being then a university student. On these occasions she talked in a rush of jokes and judgments, mostly pointing out how works and ideas that people raved about were rubbish, but how here and there—in the output of some obscure contemporary or half-forgotten figure from another century—there was something extraordinary. That was her stalwart word of praise—*extraordinary*. A hush in her voice, as if there and then and rather to her own surprise she had come on something in the world that was still to be absolutely honored.

The doctor returned with two chairs and introduced himself, quite naturally, as if there'd been no chance to do it till now.

"Eric Asher."

"He's a doctor," said Meriel. She was about to start explaining about the funeral, the accident, the flight down from Smithers, but the conversation was taken away from her.

"But I'm not here officially, don't worry," the doctor said.

"Oh, no," said Aunt Muriel. "You're here with her."

"Yes," he said.

At this moment he reached across the space between their two chairs and picked up Meriel's hand, holding it for a moment in a hard grip, then letting it go. And he said to Aunt Muriel, "How could you tell that? By my breathing?"

"I could tell," she said with some impatience. "I used to be a devil myself."

Her voice—the quaver or titter in it—made Meriel feel that there was some betrayal stirring: a betrayal of the past, perhaps of her, Meriel's, mother, and the kind of friendship she had had with this woman, or thought she had. Or of those lunches with Meriel herself, the high-minded discussions. Some degradation, which remotely excited her.

"Oh, I used to have friends," Aunt Muriel said. "Some people who had a place where we all used to go, on Bowen Island. The Delaneys. You don't remember the Delaneys?" She spoke directly to the man, not to Meriel.

"I don't think I do," he said. "No."

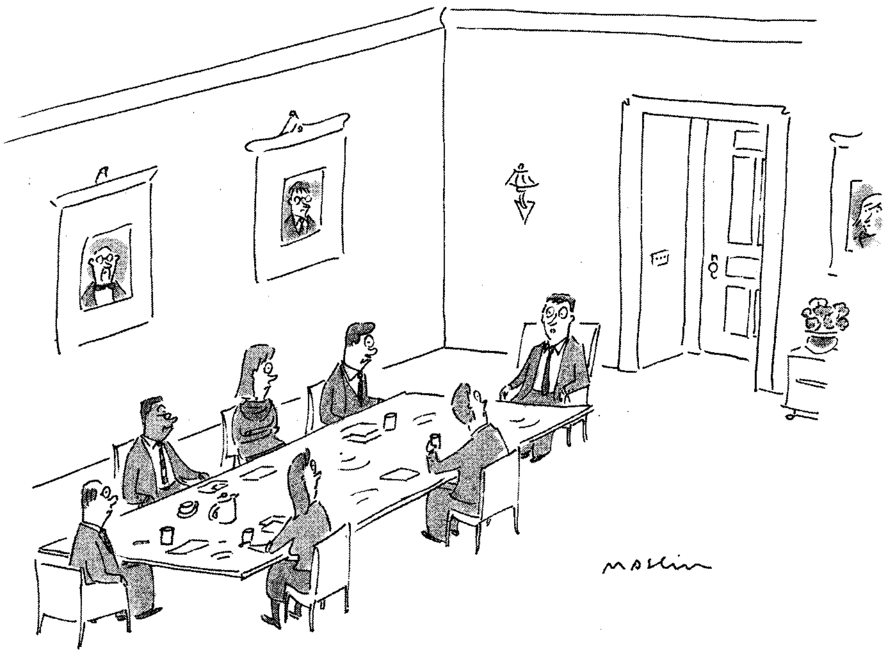
"I thought you might have heard of them. Well, there were various goings on. What took place there might have looked like an adventure but it was all according to script, if you know what I mean. So not so much of an adventure, actually. We all got drunk as skunks, of course. But they always had to have the candles lit in a circle and the music on, of course—more like a ritual. But not altogether. It didn't mean you mightn't meet somebody new and let the script go all to hell. Just meet for the first time and start kissing like mad and run off into the forest. In the dark. You couldn't get very far. Never mind. Struck down."

She had started to cough, tried speaking through the cough, gave up, and hacked violently. The doctor got up and struck her expertly a couple of times on her bent back. The coughing ended with a groan.

"Better," she said, and retrieved her story. "Oh, you knew what you were doing but you pretended not to. One time, they had a blindfold on me. Not out in the woods, that was inside. It was all right, I consented. It didn't work so well, though—I mean, I did know. There probably wasn't anybody there that I wouldn't have recognized, anyway."

She coughed again, though not so desperately as before. Then she raised her head, breathed deeply and noisily for a few minutes, holding up her hands to stall the conversation, as if she would soon have something more, something important, to say. But all she did, finally, was laugh and say, "Now I've got a permanent blindfold. Cataracts. Doesn't get me taken advantage of, in any debauch that I know about."

"How long have they been growing?" the doctor said with a respectful interest, and to Meriel's great relief there began an absorbed conversation, an informed discussion about the ripening of cataracts, their removal, the pros and cons of this operation, and Aunt Muriel's distrust of the eye doctor who was shunted off—as she said—to look after the people in here. Salacious fantasy—that was what Meriel now decided it had been—slid without the smallest difficulty into a medical chat, agreeably pessimistic on Aunt Muriel's side and carefully reassuring on the doctor's. The sort of conversation that must take place regularly within these walls.



"All in favor of getting a real conference table instead of holding up this four-by-eight-foot sheet of plywood with our knees?"

• •

A glance was exchanged between Meriel and the doctor, asking whether the visit had lasted long enough. A stealthy, considering, almost married glance, its masquerade and its bland intimacy arousing to those who were, after all, not married.

Soon.

Aunt Muriel took the initiative herself. She said, "I'm sorry, it's rude of me, I have to tell you—I get tired." No hint in her manner now of the person who had launched the first part of the conversation. Distracted, playacting, and with a vague feeling of shame, Meriel said goodbye. She had a feeling that she would never see Aunt Muriel again, and she never did.

Around a corner, with doors open on rooms where people lay asleep or perhaps watching from their beds, the doctor touched Meriel between her shoulder blades and moved his hand down her back to her waist. She realized that he was picking at the cloth of her dress, which had stuck to her damp skin when she sat pressed against the chair back. The dress was also damp under her arms.

And she had to go to the bathroom. She kept looking for the visitors' washrooms, which she thought she had spotted when they were on their way in.

There. She was right. A relief but also a difficulty, because she had to move suddenly out of his range and say "Just a moment," in a voice that sounded to herself distant and irritated. He said, "Yes," and briskly headed for the men's room, and the delicacy of the moment was lost.

When she went out into the hot sunlight, she saw him pacing by the car, smoking. He hadn't smoked before—not in Jonas's parents' house or on the way here or with Aunt Muriel. The act seemed to isolate him, to show some impatience, perhaps an impatience to be done with one thing and get on to the next. Meriel was not so sure now whether she was the next thing or the thing to be done with.

"Where to?" he said, when they were driving. Then, as if he thought he had spoken too brusquely, "Where would you like to go?" It was almost as if he were speaking to a child, or to Aunt Muriel—somebody he was bound to entertain for the afternoon. And Meriel said, "I don't know," as if she had no choice but to let herself become that sullen, burdensome child. She was holding in a wail of disappointment, a clamor of desire. Desire that had seemed to be shy and sporadic but inevitable, yet was now

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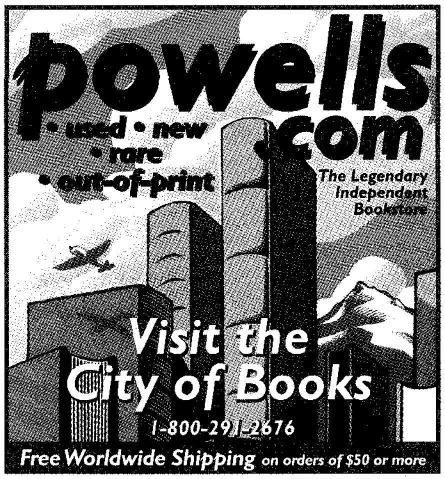

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all of a sudden to be declared inappropriate, one-sided. His hands on the wheel were all his own, reclaimed, as if he had never touched her.

"How about Stanley Park? Would you like to go for a walk in Stanley Park?"

She said, "Oh, Stanley Park. I haven't been there for ages," as if the idea had perked her up and she could imagine nothing better. And she made things worse by adding, "It's such a gorgeous day."

"It is. It is indeed."

They spoke like caricatures—it was unbearable.

"They don't give you a radio in these rented cars. Well, sometimes they do. Sometimes not."

She wound her window down as they crossed the Lions Gate Bridge. She asked him if he minded.

"No. Not at all."

"It always means summer to me. To have the window down and your elbow out and the breeze coming in—I don't think I could ever get used to air-conditioning."

"Certain temperatures, you might."

She willed herself to silence, till the forest of the park received them, and the high, thick trees could perhaps swallow witlessness and shame. Then she spoiled everything by her too deep and appreciative sigh.

Prospect Point. He read the sign aloud.

There were plenty of people around, even though it was a weekday afternoon in May, with vacations not yet started. In a moment they might remark on that. There were cars parked all along the drive up to the restaurant, and lines on the viewing platform for the coin-op binoculars.

"Aha." He had spotted a car pulling out of its place. A reprieve for a moment from any need for speech, while he idled, backed to give it room, then maneuvered into the fairly narrow spot. They got out at the same time, walked around to meet on the sidewalk. He turned this way and that, as if deciding where they were to walk. Pedestrians coming and going on any path you could see.

Her legs were shaking. She could not put up with this any longer.

"Take me somewhere else," she said.

He looked her in the face. He said, "Yes."

There on the sidewalk in the world's view. Kissing like mad.

Take me was what she had said. *Take me somewhere else*, not *Let's go somewhere else.* That is important to her. The risk, the transfer of power. Complete risk and transfer. Let's go—that would have the risk, but not the abdication, which is the start for her, in all her reliving of this moment, of the erotic slide. And what if he had abdicated in his turn? *Where else?* That would not have done, either. He has to say just what he did say. He has to say *Yes.*

He took her to the apartment where he was staying, in Kitsilano. It belonged to a friend of his who was away on a fishing boat, somewhere off the west coast of Vancouver Island. It was in a small, decent building, three or four stories high, inexpensive rather than cheap-looking. All that she would remember about it would be the glass bricks around the front entrance and the elaborate, heavy hi-fi equipment of that time, which seemed to be the only furniture in the living room.

She would have preferred another scene, and that was the one she substituted, in her memory. A narrow six- or seven-story hotel, once a fashionable place of residence, in the West End of Vancouver. Curtains of yellowed lace, high ceilings, perhaps an iron grille over part of the window, a fake balcony. Nothing actually dirty or disreputable, just an atmosphere of long accommodation of private woes and sins. There she would have to cross the little lobby with head bowed and arms clinging to her sides, her whole body permeated by exquisite shame. And he would speak to the desk clerk in a low voice that did not advertise, but did not conceal or apologize for, their purpose.

Then the ride in the old-fashioned cage of the elevator, run by an old man—or perhaps an old woman, perhaps a cripple, a sly servant of vice.

Why did she conjure up, why did she add that scene? It was for the moment of exposure, the piercing sense of shame and pride that took over her body as she walked through the (pretend) lobby, and for the sound of his voice—its discretion and authority—speaking to the clerk the words that she could not quite make out.

That might have been his tone in the drugstore a few blocks away from the apartment, after he had parked the car and said, "Just a moment in here." The practical arrangements, which seemed heavyhearted and discouraging in married life, could in these different circumstances provoke a subtle heat in her, a novel lethargy and submissive anticipation.

After dark, she was carried back again, driven through the park and across the bridge and through West Vancouver, passing only a short distance from the house of Jonas's parents. She arrived at Horseshoe Bay at almost the very last moment, and walked onto the ferry. The last days of May are among the longest of the year and, in spite of the ferry-dock lights and the lights of the cars streaming into the belly of the boat, she could see some glow in the western sky and, against it, the black mound of an island—not Bowen but one whose name she did not know—tidy as a pudding set in the mouth of the bay.

She had to join the crowd of jostling bodies making their way up the stairs, and when she reached the passenger deck she sat in the first seat she saw. She did not even bother, as she usually did, to look for a seat next to a window. She had an hour and a half before the boat docked on the other side of the strait, and during this time she had a great deal of work to do.

No sooner had the boat started to move than the people beside her began to talk. They were not casual talkers who had met on the ferry but friends or family who knew each other well and would find plenty to say for the entire crossing. So she got up and climbed to the top deck, where there were always fewer people, and sat on one of the bins that contained life preservers. She ached in expected and unexpected places.

The job she had to do, as she saw it, was to remember everything—and, by remember, she meant experience it in her mind, one more time—then store it away forever. This day's experience set in order, none of it left ragged or lying about, all of it gathered in like treasure and finished with, set aside.

She held on to two predictions, the first one comfortable and the second easy enough to accept at present, though no doubt it would become harder for her later on.

Her marriage with Pierre would continue, it would last.

She would never see the doctor again.

Both of these turned out to be right.

Her marriage did last, for more than thirty years after that—until Pierre died. During an early and not too painful stage of his illness, she read aloud to him, getting through a few books that they had both read years ago and meant to go back to. One of these was "Fathers and Sons." After she had read the scene in which Bazarov declares his violent love for Anna Sergeyevna, and Anna is horrified, they broke off for a discussion. (Not an argument—they had grown too tender for that.)

Meriel wanted the scene to go differently. She believed that Anna would not react in that way,

"It's the writer," she said. "I don't usually ever feel that, but here I feel it's just Turgenev coming and yanking them apart and he's doing it for some purpose of his own."

Pierre smiled faintly. All his expressions had become sketchy. "You think she'd succumb?"

"No. Not succumb. I don't believe her—I think she's as driven as he is. They'd do it."

"That's romantic. You're wrenching things around to make a happy ending."

"I didn't say anything about the ending."

"Listen," said Pierre patiently. "If Anna gave in, it'd be because she loved him. When it was over, she'd love him all the more. Isn't that what women are like? I mean, if they're in love? And what he'd do—he'd take off the next morning, maybe without even speaking to her. That's his nature. He hates loving her. So how would that be any better?"

"They'd have something. Their experience."

"He would pretty well forget it, and she'd die of shame and rejection. She's intelligent. She knows that."

"Well," said Meriel, pausing for a bit,

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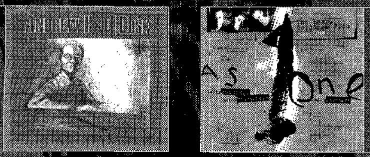

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because she felt cornered. "Well, Turgenev doesn't say that. He says she's totally taken aback. He says she's cold."

"Intelligence makes her cold. Intelligent means cold, for a woman."

"No."

"I mean in the nineteenth century. In the nineteenth century it does."

That night on the ferry, during the time when she thought she was going to get everything straightened away, Meriel did nothing of the kind. What she had to go through was wave after wave of intense recollection. And this was what she would continue to go through—at gradually lengthening intervals—for years to come. She would keep picking up things she'd missed, and these would still jolt her. She would hear or see something again—a sound they made together, the sort of look that passed between them, of recognition and encouragement. A look that was in its way quite cold, yet deeply respectful and more intimate than any look that would pass between married people, or people who owed each other anything.

She remembered his hazel-gray eyes, the close-up view of his coarse skin, a circle like an old scar beside his nose, the slick breadth of his chest as he reared up from her. But she could not have given a useful description of what he looked like. She believed that she had felt his presence so strongly, from the very beginning, that ordinary observation was not possible. Sudden recollection of even their early, unsure and tentative moments could still make her fold in on herself, as if to protect the raw surprise of her own body, the racketing of desire. *My-love-my-love*, she would mutter in a harsh, mechanical way, the words a secret poultice.

When she saw his picture in the paper, this did not happen. The clipping had been sent by Jonas's mother, who as long as she lived insisted on keeping in touch, and reminding them, whenever she could, of Jonas. "Remember the doctor at Jonas's funeral?" she had written above the small headline. "BUSH DOCTOR DEAD IN AIR CRASH." It was an old picture, surely, blurred in its newspaper reproduction. A rather chunky face, smiling—which she would never have expected him to do for the camera. He hadn't died in his own plane but in the crash of a helicopter on an emergency flight. She showed the clipping to Pierre. She said, "Did you ever figure out why he came to the funeral?"

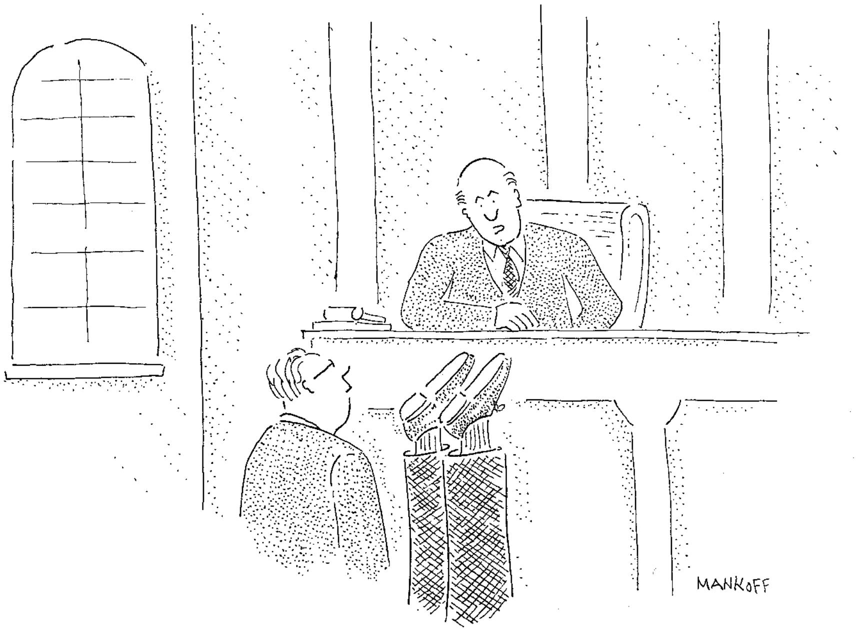
"They might have been buddies of a sort. All those lost souls up north."

"What did you talk to him about?"

"He told me about one time he took Jonas up to teach him to fly. He said, 'Never again.'"

Then Pierre asked, "Didn't he drive you someplace? Where?"

"To Lynn Valley. To see Aunt Muriel."



"Frankly, counsellor, I don't care how stressful this is for your client—tell him to get out of that damn yoga position."

"So what did you talk about?"

"I found him hard to talk to."

The fact that he was dead did not seem to have much effect on Meriel's daydreams—if that was what you could call them. The ones in which she imagined chance meetings, or even desperately arranged reunions, had never had a foothold on reality, in any case, and were not revised because he was dead. They had to wear themselves out in a way she did not control and never understood.

When she was on her way home that night, it had started to rain, not very hard. She stayed out on the deck of the ferry. She got up and walked around and could not sit down again on the lid of the life-jacket bin without getting a big wet spot on her dress. So she stayed looking at the froth stirred up in the wake of the boat and the thought occurred to her that in a certain kind of story—not the kind that anybody made up anymore—the thing for her to do would be to throw herself into the water. Just as she was, packed full of happiness, rewarded as she would surely never be again, every cell in her body plumped up with a sweet self-esteem. A romantic act that could be seen—from a forbidden angle—as supremely rational.

Was she tempted? She was probably just letting herself imagine being tempted. Probably nowhere near yielding, though yielding had been the order of that day.

It wasn't until after Pierre was dead that she remembered one further detail.

He had driven her to Horseshoe Bay, to the ferry. He had got out of the car and come around to her side. She was standing there, waiting to say goodbye to him. She made a move toward him, to kiss him—surely a natural thing to do, after the last few hours—and he had said, "No."

"No," he said. "I never do."

Of course, that wasn't true, that he never did. Never kissed out in the open, where anybody could see. He had done it just that afternoon, at Prospect Point.

No.

That was simple. A cautioning. A refusal. Protecting her, you might say, as well as himself. Even if he hadn't bothered about that earlier in the day.

I never do was something else altogether. Another kind of cautioning. Information that could not make her happy, though it might be intended to keep her from making a serious mistake. To save her from the false hopes and humiliation of a certain kind of mistake.

How did they say goodbye, then? Did they shake hands? She could not remember.

But she heard his voice, the lightness and yet the gravity of his tone, she saw his resolute, merely pleasant face, she felt the slight shift out of her range. She didn't doubt that the recollection was true. She did not see how she could have suppressed it so successfully. For all this time.

She had an idea that if she had not been able to do that, her life might have been different.

How?

She might not have stayed with Pierre. She might not have been able to keep her balance. Trying to match what had been said at the ferry with what had been said and done earlier the same day would have made her more alert and more curious. Pride or contrariness might have played a part—a need to have some man eat those words, a refusal to learn her lesson.

There was another sort of life she could have had—a life of impulse and adventure. Which was not to say she would have preferred it. It was probably because of her age (something she was always forgetting to take account of), and because of the thin, cool air she had breathed since Pierre's death, that she could think of it simply as a kind of research that had its pitfalls and achievements.

Maybe you didn't find out so much, anyway. Maybe the same thing over and over—which might be some obvious but unsettling fact about yourself. In her case, the fact that prudence—or at least some economical sort of emotional management—had been her guiding light all along.

The little self-preserving movement he made, the kind and deadly caution, the attitude of inflexibility that had grown a bit stale with him, like an outmoded swagger. She could view him now with an everyday mystification, as if he had been her husband.

She wondered if he'd stayed that way, or if some other role had been waiting for him, up ahead. ◆

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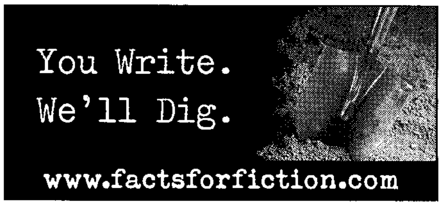

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LOST HORIZON

The sad and savage wit of A. E. Housman.

BY ANTHONY LANE

The most recent play by Sir Tom Stoppard, "The Invention of Love," will shortly be unveiled on Broadway. Opening night is March 29th. The subject of the work is A. E. Housman: poet, clerk, classical scholar, and gourmet, with a palate so fearless that he once dined on hedgehogs. If all goes according to plan, and if "The Invention of Love" hits the public nerve as sharply as Stoppard's "The Real Thing" did in revival last year, then, come spring, Housman should be back in leaf. He has never really wilted out of fashion; "A Shropshire Lad," his first and most celebrated book of poems, has remained in print since it was published, in 1896. After a slow start, it found particular favor during the Boer War, in which Housman lost a brother, and especially during the First World War, in which everyone lost brothers and sons. Housman was never Poet Laureate—he turned down almost all honors that came his way, managing to appear both lofty and lowly—but, to more than one generation, his poetry became an unofficial well of consolation:

> Here dead lie we because we did not choose
> To live and shame the land from which
> we sprung.
> Life, to be sure, is nothing much to lose,
> But young men think it is, and we were
> young.

That is Housman for you: the more simple, even heroic, the note he sounds—and the words of the poem above are as plain as crotchets on a stave—the more you catch a strain of discord or unease beating time below. After all, how consoling *are* those lines? If you were the parent of a dead soldier, Housman would give you plenty to take pride in; on the other hand, the poem—this is all it consists of—is spoken not by the mourners but by those who are mourned, and the last line, if read out loud, could easily sound bitter at the premature dashing of hopes.

On occasion, his work has been the instrument less of succor than of practical help. A devotee of American humor, with an unlikely fondness for Anita Loos, Housman never came to America, but he was visited in 1927 by Clarence Darrow, who, Housman said, "often used my poems to rescue his clients from the electric chair." In particular, Darrow had, when defending Leopold and Loeb three years before, proclaimed the lines

> Oh let not man remember
> The soul that God forgot,
> But fetch the county kerchief
> And noose me in the knot,
> And I will rot.

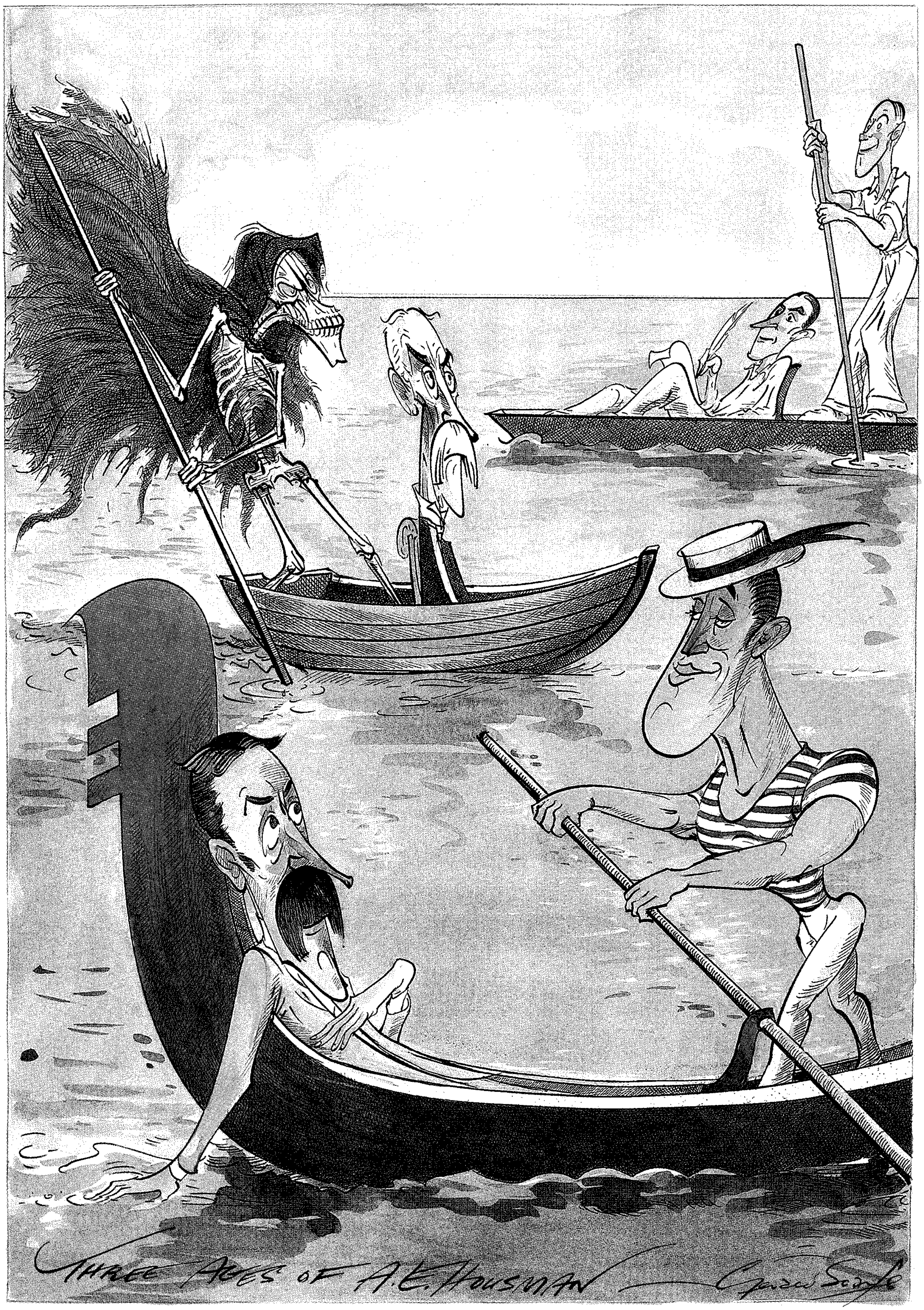
The Housman magic did the trick. (Imagine that hard final rhyme rebounding like the blow of a hammer off the courtroom walls.) The young murderers were spared execution, although a crime of almost equal magnitude was perpetrated in the process: Darrow had changed "county kerchief" to "county sheriff" for maximum effect. You do not emend Housman, perhaps the most forbidding textual commentator in the history of English-speaking scholarship, and get off lightly.

Do people still turn to Housman in their hour of need, or will it require Tom Stoppard, or another high-profile court case, to revive our fascination? To be sure, there is much in the poems that will ring awkwardly in the modern ear; most of us find it hard to muster an enthusiasm for "many a rose-lipt maiden / And many a lightfoot lad." But poetry survives the death of its diction, and there is a gentle yet insistent pressure in Housman's verse which cannot be ignored, like someone taking your arm and telling you to come for a walk. It is true that the ideal Housman reader would have the Authorized Version of the Bible, especially the Book of Isaiah, the Psalms, and Ecclesiastes, at his or her fingertips, plus a heavy grounding in Milton and, for good measure, all of Horace and Heine; but we regret that the ideal reader is unavailable at this time, and thus the field is left open to nonprofessionals—to those who have just enough time to wonder why a poem that appears, in paraphrase, to be full of the joys of spring should sound, with its long autumnal vowels, like a lament:

> When green buds hang in the elm like dust
> And sprinkle the lime like rain,
> Forth I wander, forth I must
> And drink of life again.
> Forth I must by hedgerow bowers
> To look at the leaves uncurled
> And stand in the fields where cuckoo-
> flowers
> Are lying about the world.

As Housman said, in some annoyance, about a line of Milton's that made him weep, "What in the world is there to cry about?"

Alfred Edward Housman was born in 1859, in Fockbury, a hamlet not in Shropshire but in the adjacent county of Worcestershire. His father, Edward, was a solicitor, though not an industrious one, preferring, with the cushion of inherited income, the life of a country squire. So dumbly ingrained is our notion of the standard-issue Victorian father—the pious ogre with his whipping belts—that it is always a pleasure to meet his opposite. Edward Housman may have been devout, but his devotion was



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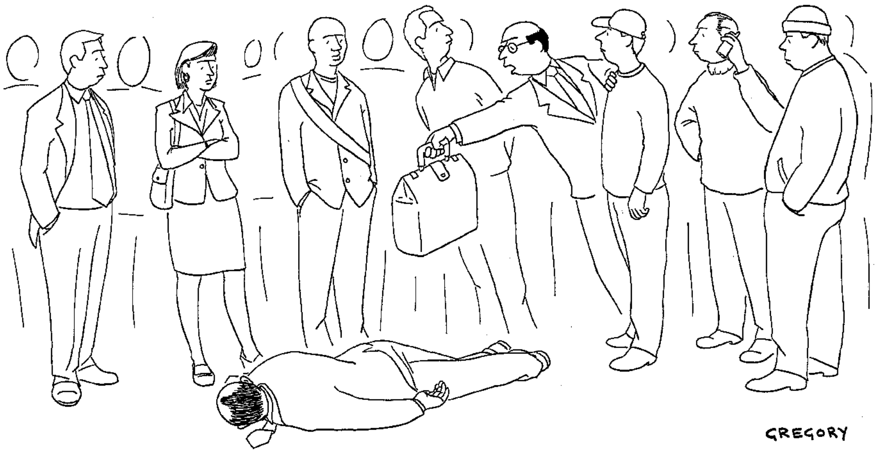

"Let me through—I'm morbidly curious!"

* *

of the charitable sort; if he heard a commotion during nursery tea, he would not only refrain from chastising the offender but, in the words of one of his children, "come and without inquiry put sugar on our bread and butter." The sweetness persisted until 1871, when his wife, Sarah Jane, Alfred's adored mother, died of cancer. Edward took to drink, although he half restored himself with a sober second marriage; Alfred, as the eldest son, was forced in his early teens to assume the responsibilities of an adult, not least with regard to his siblings. "From that time he became his own counsellor, confiding to no one his mental troubles or ambitions," his sister Kate recalled, adding, "He was sensitive and easily wounded, but wounds he bore in silence." That last phrase could be a line from one of Housman's own poems. Looking down the vista of his existence, you get the impression of one door after another being shut.

Housman was educated not far away, at Bromsgrove School; he briefly became a boarder there, when there was scarlet fever at home, and confessed to his stepmother, Lucy, that he had returned to stare at the family house, and especially at her window, from the safety—so to speak—of the local graveyard. The main charge against Housman, as a writer, is that he never truly grew up, and that his verse is murky with prolonged adolescence. In a splendid diatribe, included in "The Triple Thinkers," Edmund Wilson wrote that "Housman has managed to grow old without in a sense ever knowing maturity"; that he was one of those Englishmen who make "insane attempts to conceal their blazing lights under bushels"; and that, like Lewis Carroll or Edward FitzGerald, he seemed "checked at some early stage of growth, beyond which the sensibility and the intellect . . . may crystallize in marvellous forms, but after which there is no natural progress in the experience of human relationships." Wilson is overstating his case. There is something all too mature in the figure of the youthful Housman, standing for an hour among the graves on a winter's afternoon (you almost expect a Magwitch to grab him by the neck); he is putting away childish things with a vengeance, and to gaze toward your loved ones without being able to join them seems like early training for a life of emotional exile. Besides, to be afraid of death, and thus to clutch at ghosts of happiness, is hardly the prerogative of the teenager alone; let he who is without fear cast the first stone.

From Bromsgrove, Housman won a scholarship to St. John's College, Oxford, which is where Stoppard prefers to observe him. "The Invention of Love" is partly set on cropped croquet lawns; in a tribute to the many facets of his hero's career and temperament, Stoppard divides his time between the dead Housman, ferried by Charon over the river Styx, and Housman the living youth, boating with fellow-undergraduates along the Thames. (At one point, living

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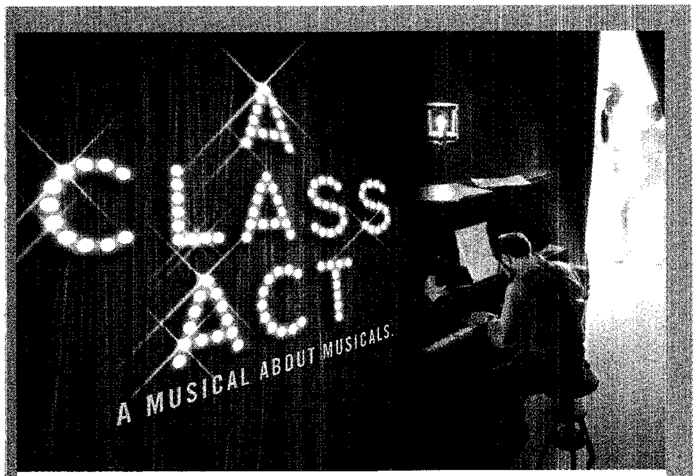
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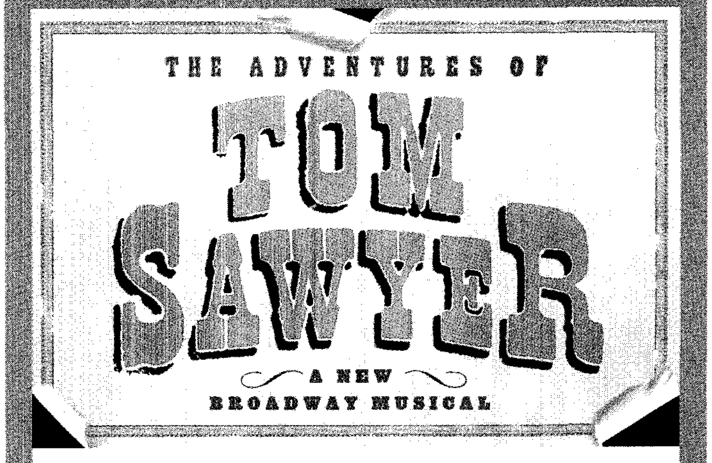
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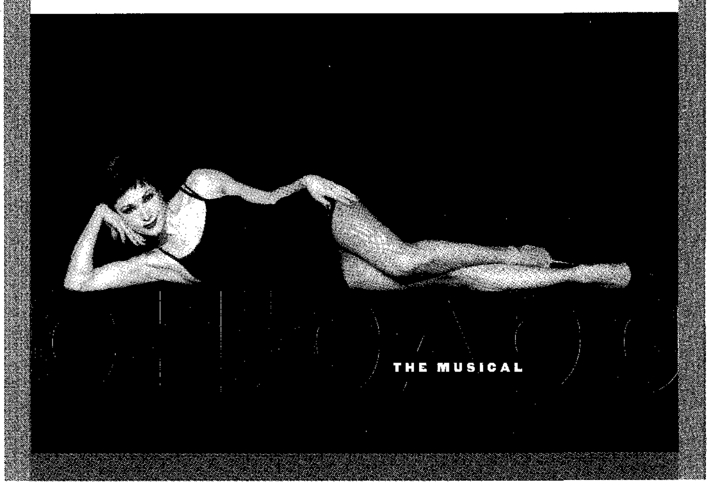
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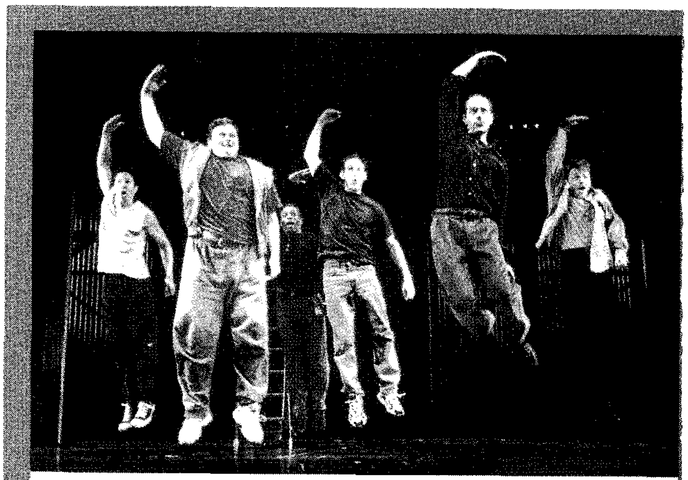

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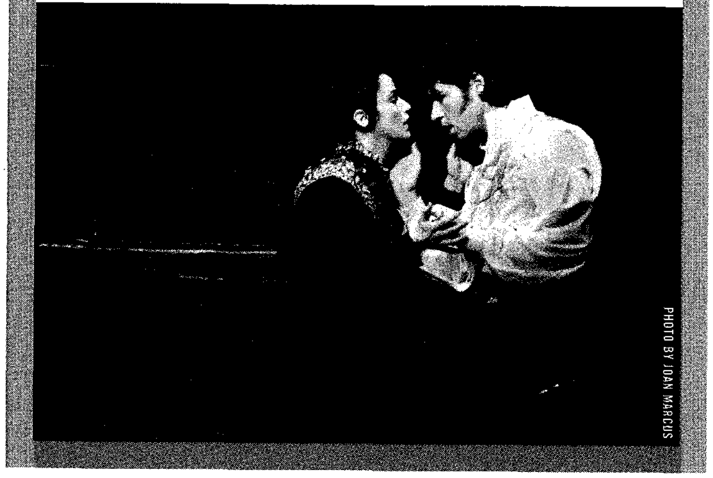

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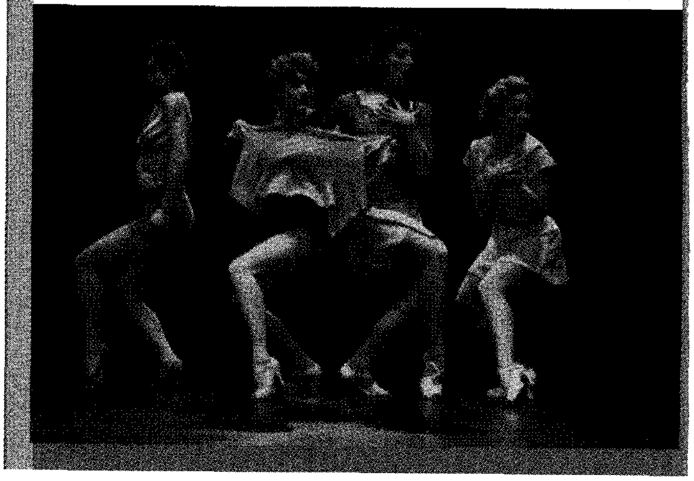

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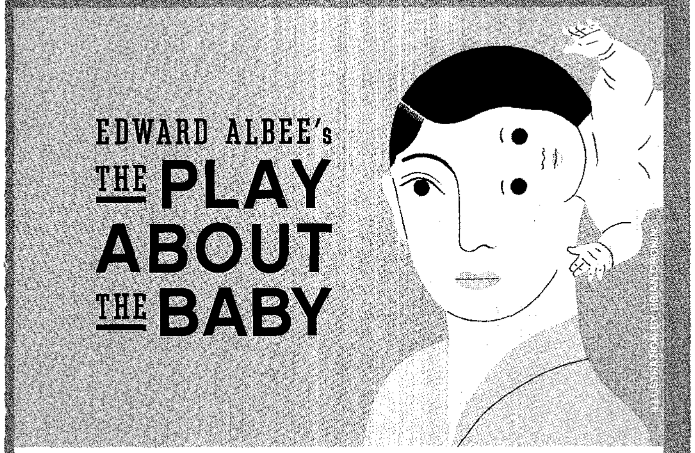

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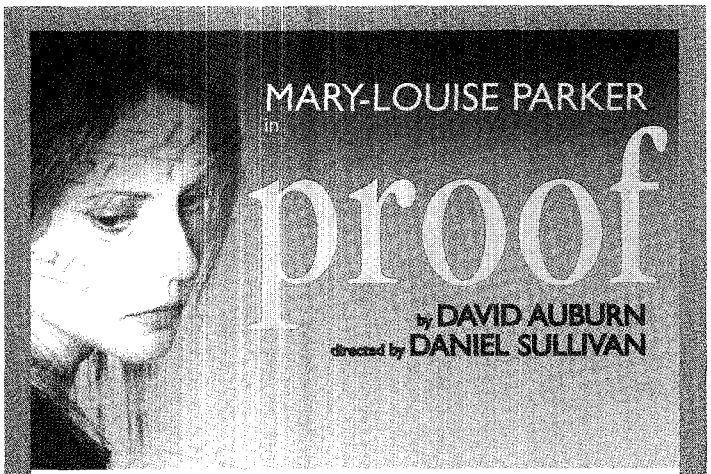

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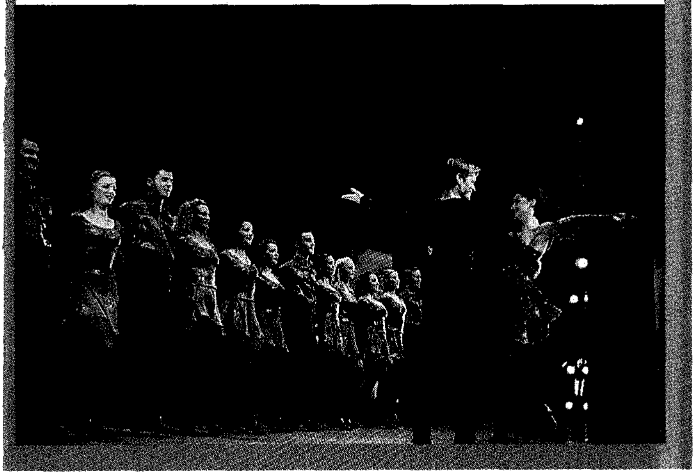

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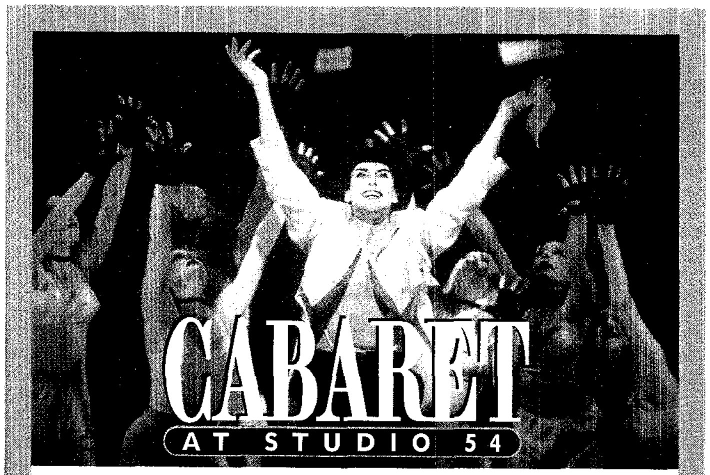

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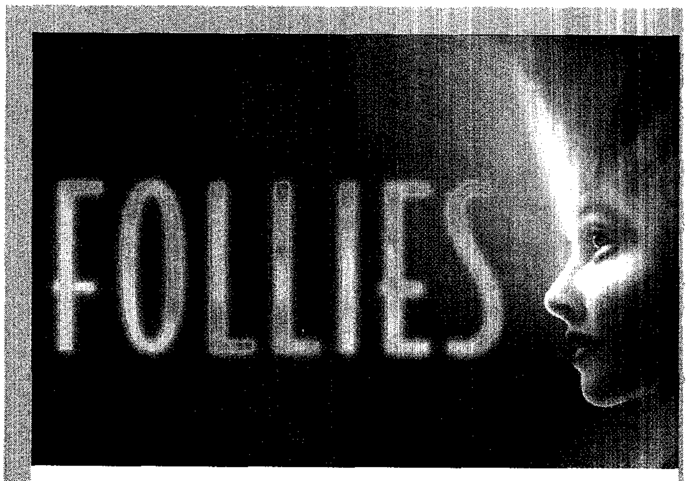

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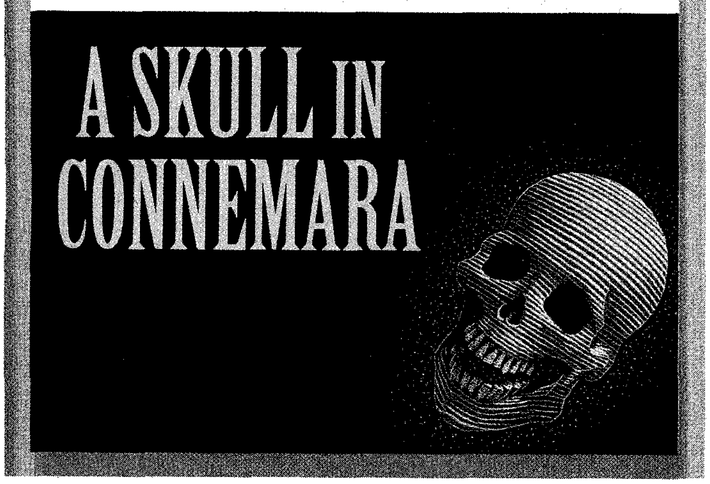

Design for Living

Tony Award® winners Alan Cumming ("Cabaret"), Jennifer Ehle ("The Real Thing"), and London sensation Dominic West light up the stage in a dazzling production of this Noël Coward classic. This witty comedy takes three decadent artists on a sexy romp through London, Paris, and New York in search of true love. Joe Mantello ("The Vagina Monologues") directs. **American Airlines Theatre, 227 West 42nd Street, 212-719-1300,** or visit **www.roundabouttheatre.org.**

DESIGN FOR LIVING

and dead enjoy a pleasant conversation.) Broadway regulars whose most pressing decision, in recent years, has been to guess whether Annie will or will not Get Her Gun may be allowed a nervous gulp as they are introduced to such characters as Mark Pattison, Rector of Lincoln College, and Benjamin Jowett, Master of Balliol, translator of Plato, and, by Housman's reckoning, barely a scholar at all. (One Oxford wag reported that Jowett's lectures consisted of "getting up quietly and giving a few faint glimpses into the obvious." I bet Stoppard wishes he had thought of that.) The play plunges Housman into the Oxford of the eighteen-eighties and the modish iridescence of the Aesthetic Movement, with its worship of fleeting intensity, but I am not altogether convinced that he had the will (or the money) to breathe that precious, Paterian air. Housman himself was succinct on the matter: "Oxford had not much effect on me, except that I there met my greatest friend."

The major events of that period were, to be brutal, non-events: he took his final exams, and he fell in love. He failed the exams, and thus wrecked—or so it seemed—his chances of an academic career. And he failed in love, although the love born in Oxford never failed him as a poet. The man he loved ("my greatest friend") was called Moses Jackson—a scientist and an athlete, a year his senior, who never knew or guessed the effect that he had had. To say that this arrangement suited Housman would be unfair, for nobody could wish such misery on another, but one wonders how he might have coped with requital. The times were against it; "A Shropshire Lad" came out during Oscar Wilde's imprisonment, and we know that, when Wilde was denied reading matter in jail, his friend Robert Ross used to learn some of Housman's poems by heart and recite them during visits to the prisoner. Housman wrote a rattling allegory on the injustice of the case ("Oh they're taking him to prison for the colour of his hair"). Yet all his instincts—or, rather, the cautious channellings of instinct into art—were set against Wildean display, and his poetry shrinks from the ostentatious heart that is bared by "The Ballad of Reading Gaol." Only after Housman's death did various verses come to light in a memoir by his brother Laurence. Some are no longer than a quatrain:

> He would not stay for me; and who can
>   wonder?
> He would not stay for me to stand and
>   gaze.
> I shook his hand and tore my heart in sunder
> And went with half my life about my
>   ways.

The rest of Housman's life was one of monastic triumph, rigid with a certain furtive pride, although no one studying Housman—and he draws obsessives to him, as if to challenge them with his own example—can ever quite miss the scent of shame. At school he had been nicknamed Mouse, and his chosen burrows were hardly freer than traps. W. H. Auden, in a poet-to-poet sonnet, chastised him lightly for this secrecy:

> Deliberately he chose the dry-as-dust,
> Kept tears like dirty postcards in a
>   drawer.

To which Housman might reply, "Best place for them."

He took a London job in the Patent Office, where he worked conscientiously for a decade. His was a double existence; largely unsuspected by colleagues, he spent his free time in the British Museum, examining manuscripts by classical authors, and publishing his findings in learned journals. These were rated so highly that in 1892 he was offered the post of Professor of Latin at University College, London; for a man who had flunked his degree, this was extraordinary, but the appointments board had neither doubts nor options. He stayed at London for nineteen years, occasionally reducing his female students to tears by sheer steeliness of brain, compounded by an inability to remember their names, before becoming the Professor of Latin at Cambridge. He was made a fellow of Trinity College, and remained there until his death, in 1936. There was a misprint in the funeral service, which presumably means that Housman, like Turnus at the close of the Aeneid, fled groaning to the shades.

Virginia Woolf wrote that there were no lives more mysterious than those of

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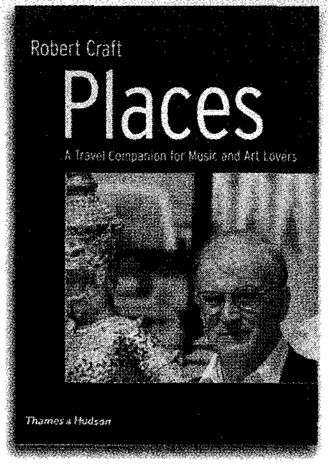

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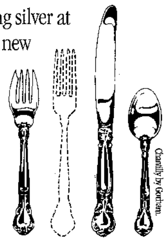

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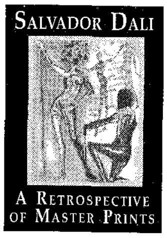
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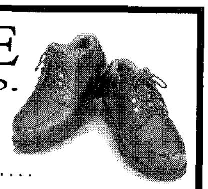
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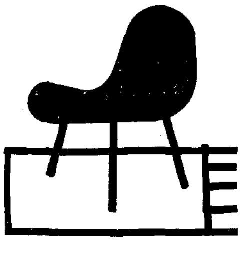
the great scholars, and in Housman's case the plot undeniably thickened. In London and at Trinity, his labors intensified; his five-volume edition of Manilius, an astronomer-poet from the age of Augustus, consumed no fewer than thirty-four years of his professional life—if you include the addenda to the second edition of 1937, as Housman would wish you to. Yet these were also the decades during which he learned to allow himself what looks suspiciously like fun. One friend, A. C. Benson, said that Housman "appeared to be descended from a long succession of maiden aunts," although another, Grant Richards, used to invite him for holidays with the Richards family in Cornwall, and anyone who views Housman as gloom in a suit will be surprised to hear of him picnicking on a beach and running in bare feet to rescue a child from high rocks. There is also a perfect, apocryphal poem about a couple of Cambridge professors which manages, in four lines, to laugh at both yearning and pedantry—his abiding specialties. Rumor attributes it to Housman, and one prays that rumor is right:

> *First don:* O cuckoo, shall I call thee bird,
> Or but a wandering voice?
> *Second don:* State the alternative preferred,
> With reasons for your choice.

No wonder he needed to get out of college. Starting in 1897, the poet decided to travel during vacations; accompanied by friends, he would visit the Continent by car or, to his soaring joy, by airplane. When Housman decided to investigate a subject, it stayed investigated, and he was so terrifying a connoisseur of French cuisine and wine, especially Burgundy, that, to read his biographers, you get a slightly Feydeau-like sense of portly sommeliers running to do his bidding from every corner of the land. "To watch the poet dressing a crab was a revelation," one observer said. "I never knew poets ate such food." There were other, less public tastes. Richard Perceval Graves, the author of the most excitable account of the poet's life, spends pages on a Venetian gondolier named Andrea, with whom Housman is said (we have no direct evidence) to have had a long-standing affair. Graves also refers us to a small document belonging to Housman that lists "what would seem to be references to a number of male prostitutes, including sailors and ballet-dancers." Never did "seem" have such a load to bear.

It was back in his study, though, that Housman was most roused to action. This was of little concern to the world beyond, but it was highly disturbing if your name happened to be Owen, an editor of Persius and Juvenal: "Mr. Owen's innovations, so far as I can see, have only one merit, which certainly, in view of their character, is a merit of some magnitude: they are few." Or poor Dr. Postgate, an editor of Phaedrus: "Dr Postgate's notes on I 19 7, 28 5, IV 9 5, 17 8 and 10, 18 14, 20 15, V 5 1, *app.* 13 25, 14 10, 15 10, appear to have been written before he knew what his text was going to be, or after he had forgotten what it was." Not even those who typeset a new edition of Martial are spared the rod: "The printers have indulged immoderately in their favourite sport of dropping letters on the floor and then leaving them to lie there or else putting them back in wrong places; and at the top of p. 113 of the text their merriment transgresses the bounds of decorum." In the event that you ever come across the three volumes of Housman's "Classical Papers" in a secondhand bookstore, grab them; even if you don't have a word of Latin or Greek (and Housman convinces you that it is better to have no words than to have the wrong ones), his sense of passionate glee, as he strops his intellectual knives for the purposes of ritual disembowelment, offers the reader as unflagging a demonstration of native wit as can be found in English since the reign of Sydney Smith. Housman has none of Smith's tolerance or Christian benignity, but this is the arena of pure scholarship, where slackness is a sin beyond purgation.

By now you could be forgiven for thinking that what Housman meant by classical studies had nothing to do

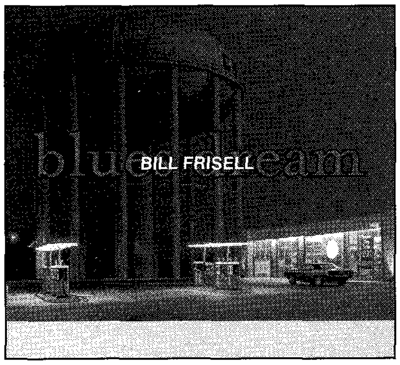


with literature—or, at any rate, that he treated ancient texts not as founts of wisdom but as diseased bodies that required unflinching attention if they were to be made whole. He even dismissed Manilius, on whom he expended half his existence, as "facile and frivolous." Some readers have found this attitude not merely perplexing but distressing, as if Housman were using his professional skills to deny himself the pleasures of the text—as if to admit that you were moved by Propertius, say, were somehow to admit failure. How could the author of "A Shropshire Lad," a book that feels snowbound with sadness, inhabit the same body as the stone-hearted critic? I cannot see the clash; Housman loved Propertius from his years at Oxford, and, as a poet, and therefore as a card-carrying defender of the mot juste, he saw himself as honor-bound to discover if what he loved really *was* Propertius or merely inferior guesswork, either of an ancient scribe or of a well-meaning twentieth-century idiot. Just occasionally, despite himself, Housman showed his hand. After his death, a Mrs. Pym, formerly a pupil, wrote to the London *Times*, recalling a lecture that he had delivered in 1914, in the course of which he had recited Horace Odes IV 7. Earthly love, Horace regrets to inform us, is no more permanent than the thawing and refreezing of the seasons, and that, for Housman, was too much to bear:

> He read the ode aloud with deep emotion, first in Latin and then in an English translation of his own. "That," he said hurriedly, almost like a man betraying a secret, "I regard as the most beautiful poem in ancient literature," and walked quickly out of the room.

It is a scene of high drama, and I was sorry that Stoppard could not find room to embed it in his play, although he does have the young Housman refer in wounded awe to the poem in question: "*Diffugere nives* goes through me like a spear."

"The Invention of Love," itself the invention of a smart romantic, proceeds on the assumption that the sharpest spear ever to transfix Housman was his love of Moses Jackson. The play is cold to alternatives—to the notion of Housman as rural elegist, for instance. Shropshire is dismissed by our hero, in the opening



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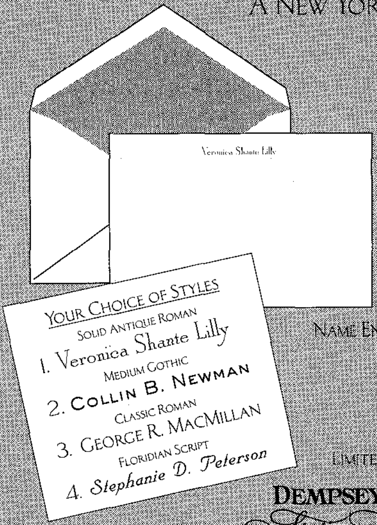

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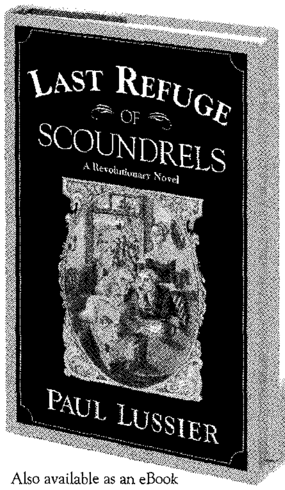

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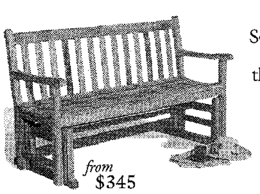

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scene, as "a county where I never lived and seldom set foot," and, geographically, one cannot quibble. Housman once admitted visiting the Shropshire town of Bridgnorth "for several hours," for the gathering of "local colour." To those sturdy readers who like to know, and go, where literature is set, this must be a grave disappointment; imagine Thoreau saying that he once packed a bathing costume and stopped off at Walden Pond for a dip. But Shropshire is precisely *not* where most of "A Shropshire Lad" is set; it is a place to be looked at, or longed for, endlessly out of reach. When Housman was a boy, he used to climb a hill near his home and look westward, toward Shropshire:

Into my heart an air that kills
   From yon far country blows:
What are those blue remembered hills,
   What spires, what farms are those?

That is the land of lost content,
   I see it shining plain,
The happy highways where I went
   And cannot come again.

That "come" rings strangely on the ear; we are expecting "go," as the counterpart to "went," and "come" is like a tragic slip of the tongue. It suggests that, even if only for the duration of the poem, he has rejoined the highways—or, at any rate, fallen under the illusion that they still exist to be trod.

In recent years, the strongest aid to our grasp of Housman—at once the most exhaustive and the most suggestive—has been Archie Burnett's 1997 edition of the poems. Housman published only two volumes of verse in his lifetime; there is something very Eeyore-like in the way that he moved directly from "A Shropshire Lad," in 1896, to "Last Poems," in 1922, followed by the afterthought of "More Poems" shortly after his death, in 1936. It is the slimmest of outputs, yet Burnett, who deserves some sort of medal for having the valor to submit Housman, of all people, to editorial attention, has unearthed enough variations and allusions to fill five hundred and eighty pages. There is nothing more beautiful in the Housman canon than "'Tis time, I think, by Wenlock town," the thirty-ninth poem in "A Shropshire Lad," and I like the salutary shock of checking the variant readings in Burnett and discovering that the word "Wenlock" in the glorious lines "Oh tarnish late on Wenlock Edge, / Gold that I never see" had once been "Kinver," which needs to be pronounced with a pursed, and meaner, mouth. Truth is all very well, but in the map of the mind every place has to sound ideal. To say that Housman's ear is impeccable need not imply that his other organs were defective; he had the exacting eye of a naturalist ("The plum broke forth in green, / The pear stood high and snowed"), and no poet except Keats has made stranger reference, more wincing than drooling, to the properties of taste:

When the bells justle in the tower
   The hollow night amid,
Then on my tongue the taste is sour
   Of all I ever did.

I taste blood, iron-rich, when I read that short poem, and I think at once of Housman's infamous statement, in his 1933 Cambridge lecture "The Name and Nature of Poetry," that "experience has taught me, when I am shaving of a morning, to keep watch over my thoughts, because, if a line of poetry strays into my memory, my skin bristles so that the razor ceases to act." The most donnish of poets turns out to be helplessly physical in his response to the stuff of which poetry is made; it gets to him like a horror movie, and, once you know that, you start to notice all those clipped, semi-slangy, monosyllabic phrases with which he likes, as it were, to wake himself up: "A dead man out of mind," "And God knows why," "Guts in the head." Sometimes a single word is enough to crack the mood, and to rescue the beautiful from the menace of the pretty:

On russet floors, by waters idle,
   The pine lets fall its cone;
The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
   In leafy dells alone;
And traveller's joy beguiles in autumn
   Hearts that have lost their own.

On acres of the seeded grasses
   The changing burnish heaves;
Or marshalled under moons of harvest
   Stand still all night the sheaves;
Or beeches strip in storms for winter
   And stain the wind with leaves.

Shout, heave, strip, stain: this was not a writer who turned up his nose or averted his gaze. (If I could sit him

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down to dinner with anyone, it would be Emily Dickinson: the master and mistress of the short line and the sensory jolt, each with immaculate manners. You never know; it might work.) The Housman mythology, with its lads outnumbering lasses, its redcoated soldiers, and its short-lived flowers, may seem to be drifting back into the Tennysonian age, or further, but "A Shropshire Lad" keeps snapping to attention with phrases like "Put the pistol to your head," as if to remind any antiquarian readers that they will shortly be arriving at the twentieth century. Even one of the most famous verses in the collection begins with the urgency of a potboiler: "On Wenlock Edge the wood's in trouble." We are supposed to be in deepest pastoral, but that sounds to me like someone running into a bar to report a nearby fight.

If anything, Broadway, far from being too rough for Housman, may turn out to be too tame. When I learned that the director of "The Invention of Love" would be Jack O'Brien, who was responsible for the stage version of "The Full Monty," I was not *entirely* convinced. If there is any man in history who could not have been prevailed upon to strip in front of cheering women, that man is A. E. Housman. On reflection, though, he was not averse, in either poetry or prose, to the occasional half monty, the cunning flash of self-exposure. Lecturing for the first time before the august fellows of University College, the thirty-three-year-old Housman had the nerve to tell them how to live: "One lifetime, nine lifetimes are not long enough for the task of blocking every cranny through which calamity may enter. . . . A life spent, however victoriously, in securing the necessaries of life is no more than an elaborate furnishing and decoration of apartments for the reception of a guest who is never to come. Our business here is not to live, but to live happily." Housman's own business can hardly be said to have flourished, yet, as he went on to say, "we must make up our minds to risk something," and so he did, whatever his detractors may allege. He took a chance on love, and lost; versed in loss, he took a chance on immortality, and, although these are early days, I reckon that he will win. ♦

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BOOKS

FAIRY TALES AND PARADIGMS

In essays and a novel, A. S. Byatt explores the pleasures of historical fiction.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

In March of 1999, the English writer and critic A. S. Byatt, once best known as the sister of Margaret Drabble but now a formidable literary presence in her own right, gave the Richard Ellmann memorial lectures at Emory University, a series of three, and a week later hustled north to present the Finzi-Contini lecture at Yale. These four discourses, plus a paper given at Oxford in a series on the writing of history, a contribution to an anthology in which women were invited to write about their favorite fairy tales, and an essay on the "Thousand and One Nights" for a *Times Magazine* millennial issue, constitute "On Histories and Stories: Selected Essays" (Harvard; $22.95). The seven pieces in sum offer the most spirited and knowledgeable discussion of fiction's basic questions that I have read for some time. These questions—the kind that surrounded the creation of the French *nouveau roman* and were reawakened a decade or so later by the magic realists of Latin America—are rarely raised in the United States, where discussions of how literature represents reality have been smothered beneath the arid fuss of politicized deconstruction. Our national notion of a hot literary topic is "Did Shakespeare favor the oppression of women?" or, more urgent yet, "Will the electronic revolution kill print?" But, meanwhile, works of imagination continue to be written, and no creative writer, at this late date, with all possible changes apparently rung on the century-old peal of modernism, can avoid asking to what purpose.

Byatt is a vigorous exponent of the view that there is nothing wrong with making books out of books—with admitting that the impulse to write stems from enthusiastic reading, and that literary adventure takes place in a mental world generated from existent texts. Her own recent works of fiction are furiously bookish, and her Ellmann lectures propose a look at "the sudden flowering of the historical novel in Britain," a flowering that defies a widespread critical view that (as she paraphrases her own sister, in a 1997 address to the American Academy of Arts and Letters) "it is the novelist's duty to write about the present, to confront an age which is 'ugly, incomprehensible, and subject to rapid mutations.' " This alleged duty to confront contemporary life has been urged upon Americans lately by the polemical journalist Tom Wolfe, and a hundred years ago was urged upon Sarah Orne Jewett by Henry James, who, in tactful chastisement of a work of hers titled "The Tory Lover," wrote of the "fatal *cheapness*," the "mere *escamotage*" of "the 'historic' novel":

> You have to think with your modern apparatus a man, a woman—or rather fifty—whose own thinking was intensely otherwise conditioned, you have to simplify back by an amazing tour de force—and even then it's all humbug.

Nevertheless, "historic" humbug continues to occupy not only the reprehensible "nostalgia/heritage/fancy dress/costume drama" (as Drabble put it) hacks but such distinguished and subtle contemporary British writers as Julian Barnes, Peter Ackroyd, John Fowles, Pat Barker, Graham Swift, Kazuo Ishiguro, and, of course, A. S. Byatt, whose monumental romance of literary detective work, "Possession" (1990), won the Booker Prize. The beat goes on: the Australian Peter Carey and the Americans Thomas Mallon and Toni Morrison favor historical venues for their fiction; the Canadian grandes dames Alice Munro and Margaret Atwood movingly explore female predicaments in past decades and centuries; and a charming, modest fictional reconstruction of Vermeer's world, "Girl with a Pearl Earring," by the young writer Tracy Chevalier made a surprising foray onto last year's

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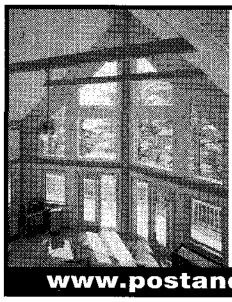

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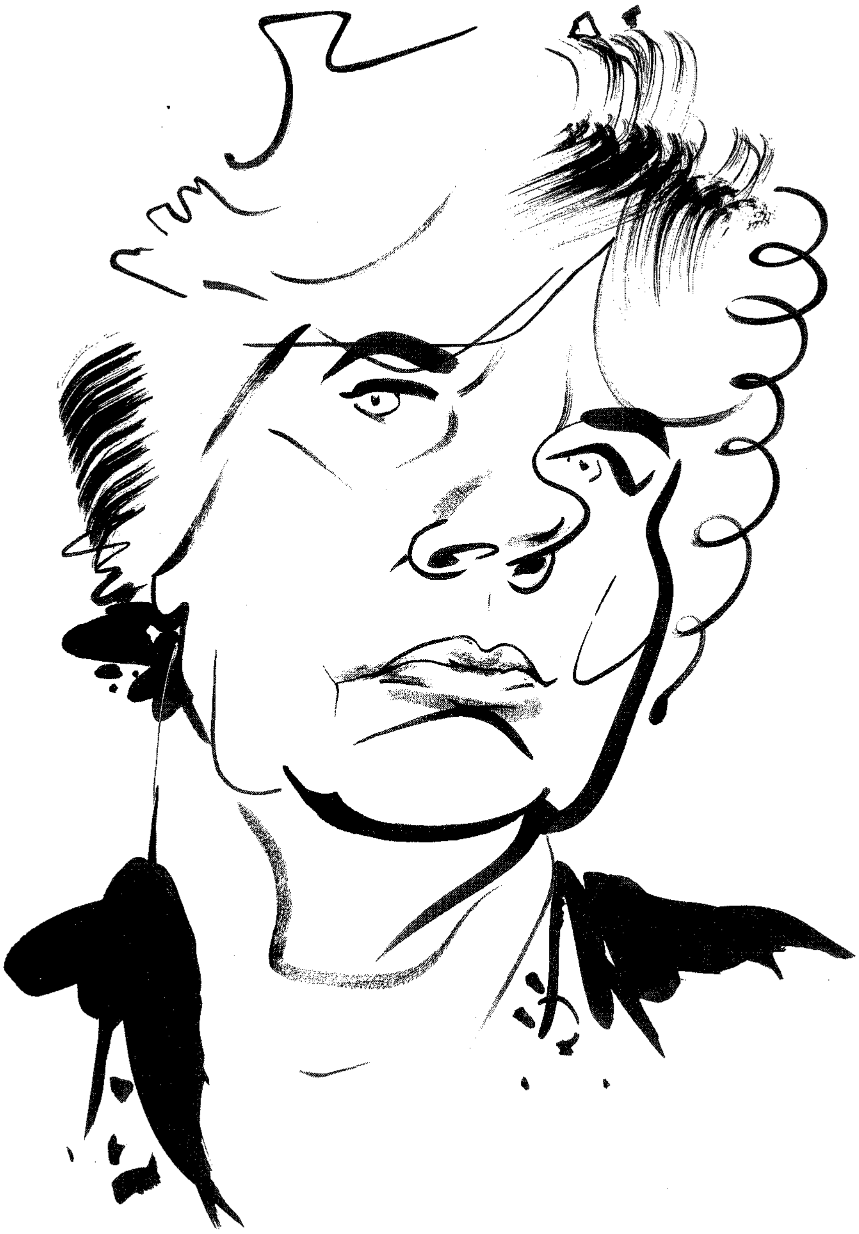
best-seller lists. The recently deceased Penelope Fitzgerald is much cited by Byatt, as the author of a rare kind of historical fiction (short, diffident, but rich in resonance), and before her there was Anthony Burgess, who let his tremendous intellectual curiosity take him to the times of Shakespeare and Napoleon and early Christianity, and William Golding, the last British writer to win the Nobel Prize, who ventured, one firm footstep after another, into Neanderthal prehistory and medieval cathedral building.

What led such an impressive crew to abandon what James called "the palpable present *intimate* that throbs responsive" and submit to a precarious dependence upon, as he said, "the little facts that can be got from pictures and documents, relics and prints"? Byatt suggests a number of answers: the wish to dramatize analogies with the present; the "political desire to write the histories of the marginalized"; and, in this age of a dissolved sense of self, a liking for "historical persons because they are unknowable, only partly available to the imagination, and we find this occluded quality attractive." The question is, after all, less than absolute: even a novel of contemporary life demands some reach of research and fakery, since personal experience goes only so far; and, as an author ages, personal reminiscences become ever more historical—among the novels Byatt discusses are two, by Muriel Spark and Penelope Fitzgerald, drawing, in 1963 and 1980, respectively, upon the authors' memories of the Second World War.

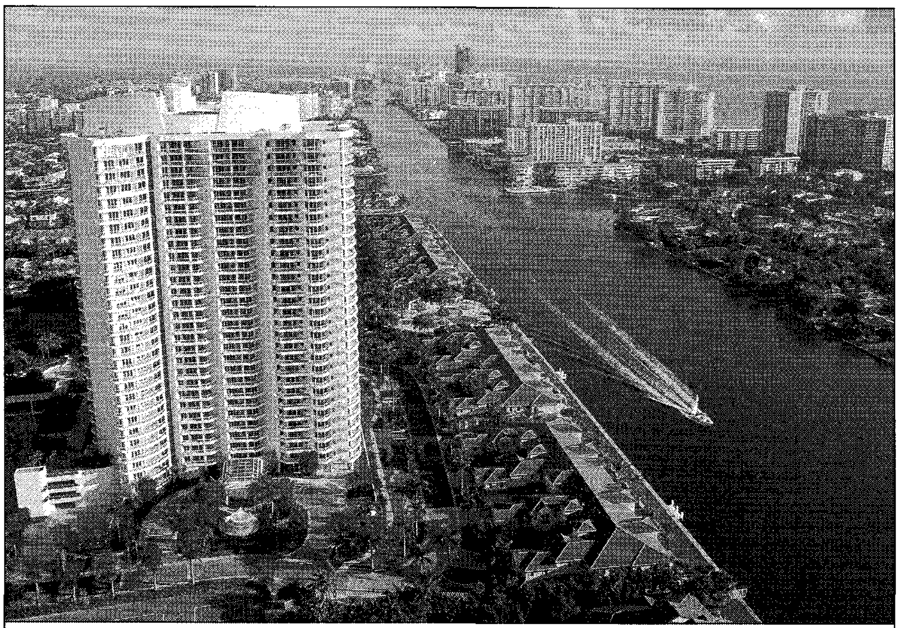
A group of historical novelists, interviewed some ten years ago, came up with a surprisingly uniform answer to this question of why they do it: "They wanted to write in a more elaborate, more complex way, in longer sentences, and with more figurative language." It is true that one of the pleasures of contemporary imitations of the past lies in the language, in both description and dialogue. Though Hemingway, Henry Green, Raymond Carver, and others have made what music they could of laconic, elliptical modern idiom, people prior to 1920, rich and poor, do seem to have expressed themselves better, with more cogency, pith, grace, mannerliness, and artful irony. As, in an increasingly visual and non-oral culture, linguistic elegancies fade, their revival and preservation seem worth the effort, even at the cost of a certain campy, parodic note. Also, since the Second World War more and more writers have come up through graduate schools; they are not afraid of research, and trust it to contain life enough. And there is, I would suggest, an instinctive attraction to the time before "the religious sense was lost to the English novel"—a formulation by Graham Greene that Byatt quotes. "With the religious sense," Greene claimed, "went the sense of the importance of the human act." The novel was born in Christendom, and the possibilities of good and evil, heroism and villainy are crucial to it. George Eliot's "Middlemarch" is a far more intricate, organic, passionately mimetic construct than "The Pilgrim's Progress," but both basically concern the protagonist's effort to save her or his soul. Without souls to save, are mundane lives worth writing about? The historical novel steals strength and drama from the era of disturbed but pervasive faith in which the genre's model classics were born.



Byatt's creative method is to saturate herself in texts.

PAUL HAMLYN

Byatt, who is from an intellectual Yorkshire family, graduated from Cambridge University with first-class honors in 1957 and taught English and American literature full time from 1972 to 1984, so she was not sheltered from the winds of structuralist and deconstructionist theory that have dishevelled English departments since I was a student in one. With calm assurance she slings



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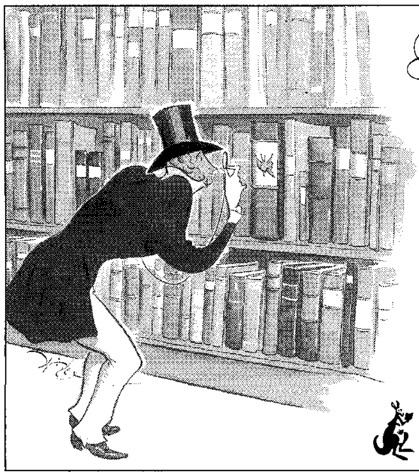

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terms like "closure" and "paradigm" and, better yet, "paradigmatic narratives." Her scope of reference and the number of her plot summaries show a gluttonous appetite for reading. A multilingual Euro-era Brit, she is at home not only with the French theorists but with Italian philosophers of the tale such as Roberto Calasso and Italo Calvino; she responds to "a general European interest in storytelling, and in thinking about storytelling." She cites admiringly the Austrian Christoph Ransmayr, the Basque Bernardo Atxaga, the Danish Karen Blixen, the Dutch Cees Nooteboom, the British immigrant (from Germany) W. G. Sebald. Self-conscious, eclectic literariness is the hallmark of postmodernism, and she pays tribute to Calvino and Borges, and to the icy, glassy fairy tales that entranced her girlhood. The texture of her own writing has the seraglio opulence, the feeling of a flat design luxuriantly filled, to be found at the opposite end of Europe, in the work of the Turkish Orhan Pamuk. Byatt is a writer actively searching for sources of energy outside the comfort zone of British social fiction. "European storytelling," she writes, "derives great energy from artifice, constraints, and patterning." Of two works of her own, she allows:

> I like the formal *energy* of the relations between Swedenborg's Divine Human and Hallam's insatiable love of God in *The Conjugial Angel*, and the personifications in *Morpho Eugenia*—Venus, Ant Queen, Dame Kind, Matilda.

The categorizations of pre-modern, pre-quantum science *and* religion excite her, and a reader of her fiction must be prepared to share this somewhat pedantic excitement.

Byatt's Oxford lecture, "True Stories and the Facts in Fiction," was delivered shortly after she completed her two dense and delicious novellas, "The Conjugial Angel" and "Morpho Eugenia" (published together, as "Angels and Insects," in 1992), and tells us a good deal about her method of courting inspiration. Both novellas had their roots in courses she was teaching in the English department of University College, London—the former in a lecture she "used to give on the presence of Arthur Henry Hallam in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*,"

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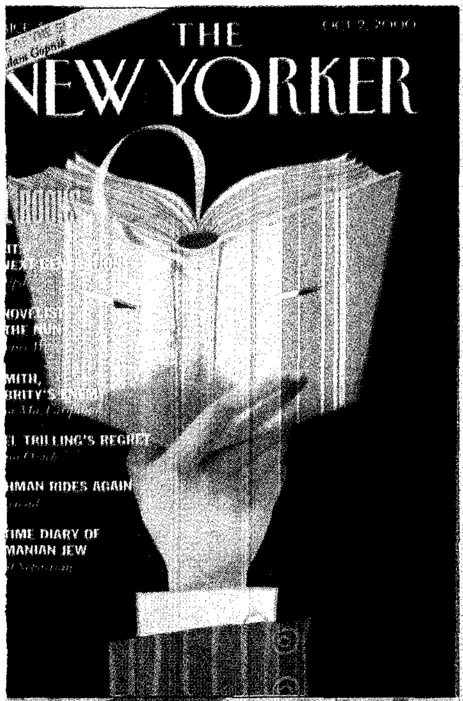
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and the latter in readings of Darwin "in connection with George Eliot's novels and essays." The notions involved, she admits, "could have turned into academic papers." Passages of both narratives have the exact texture of such papers, whether on insect societies or "In Memoriam A.H.H." Both stories began, she relates, with a footnote that piqued her curiosity and set her to dreaming, and reading. In the case of "The Conjugial Angel," the footnote concerned the "occluded" historical figure of Emily Tennyson Jesse, the poet's sister and the fiancée of Arthur Hallam before his unexpected death, in Vienna, at the age of twenty-two. Byatt "immersed" herself, "over a period of years," in a

> disparate set of texts. Biographical texts about Hallams, Tennysons, and Swedenborg. Swedenborg's writings. Angels in dictionaries of angels, and the Book of Revelation. *In Memoriam*, again and again. Victorian theories of the afterlife. It is a process like trawling, or knitting, and recurring themes and patterns began to make themselves.

While exploring the key incident—in which Emily, after many years of marriage to a Captain Jesse, refused the proposal, offered in a séance, to be reunited with Hallam after death—Byatt read Alex Owen's "The Darkened Room," "a gripping feminist account of nineteenth-century mediumship as one of the few professions open to women." To such readings Byatt brings not just her trawling or knitting compulsions but a brilliant creative humor: the séances that compose much of her novella's action are alarmingly, uproariously well imagined—with the psyches of the four attendees and the two mediums churning away as automatic writing pours forth from the afterlife and uncannily realized angels and revenants come and go. (There is a séance in "Possession" as well, and Byatt has described how that novel's many fabricated nineteenth-century poems, undertaken with trepidation by a non-poet, then "wrote themselves, hardly blotted"—"it was actually quite frightening.") If the frequent quotations from Victorian verse, in "The Conjugial Angel," at times give us the classroom yawns, and Arthur Hallam's youthful effusions verge on the insufferable, it is all in the good if ghoulish cause of bringing dead voices back to life. Life is at stake, clayey death presses upon it; nothing less than our physical and spiritual natures is the topic, as they are of Tennyson's great, graveside poem.

Byatt evidently walks toward her fictions in a daze of what Thomas Mann called "*directed* reading." Well after her composition has begun, she is open to fresh textual stimuli; while concluding "The Conjugial Angel," she "found a wonderful piece of theology in Swedenborg for [the] final fictional séance." The very title of the companion novella, "Morpho Eugenia," was encountered long after the author had named her heroine Eugenia. In a foreword to the Franklin Library signed edition of "Angels and Insects," she writes:

> One thing that never ceases to surprise me is the way stories and ideas seem to attract discoveries like magnets—my heroine was called "Eugenia" (well-bred) from early on, but it was very late that I found in [W.H.] Bates a description of a real Amazonian butterfly, Morpho Eugenia, the shapely, the beautiful Eugenia—Morpho is one of the names of Aphrodite.

Making herself into a magnet, the author again plunged into reading matter: "Ants, bees, Amazon travels, Darwin, books about Victorian servant life, butterflies and moths—resisting, rather than searching out useful metaphors, but nevertheless finding certain recurring patterns." "Morpho Eugenia" soars a little less high out of its papery cocoon of erudition than the other, earlier novella; imagined passages of post-Darwin theology, of empirical ant observation, of a philosophical fairy tale based on entomology go on at leisurely length while the country-house melodrama—sketched with a gay flair and an ivory miniaturist's translucent touch—hangs suspended. The hero and the heroine (not Eugenia) write their way out of their poverty and subservient positions in the household, and this happy development puts the reader wistfully in mind of the immense appetite for the written word evinced by the Victorians and, still, by A. S. Byatt.

Her creative method—saturating herself in texts, counting on a flood of information to bring her what she needs—seems a hypertrophied form of normal authorial procedure. Her masses of borrowings and imitations are saved

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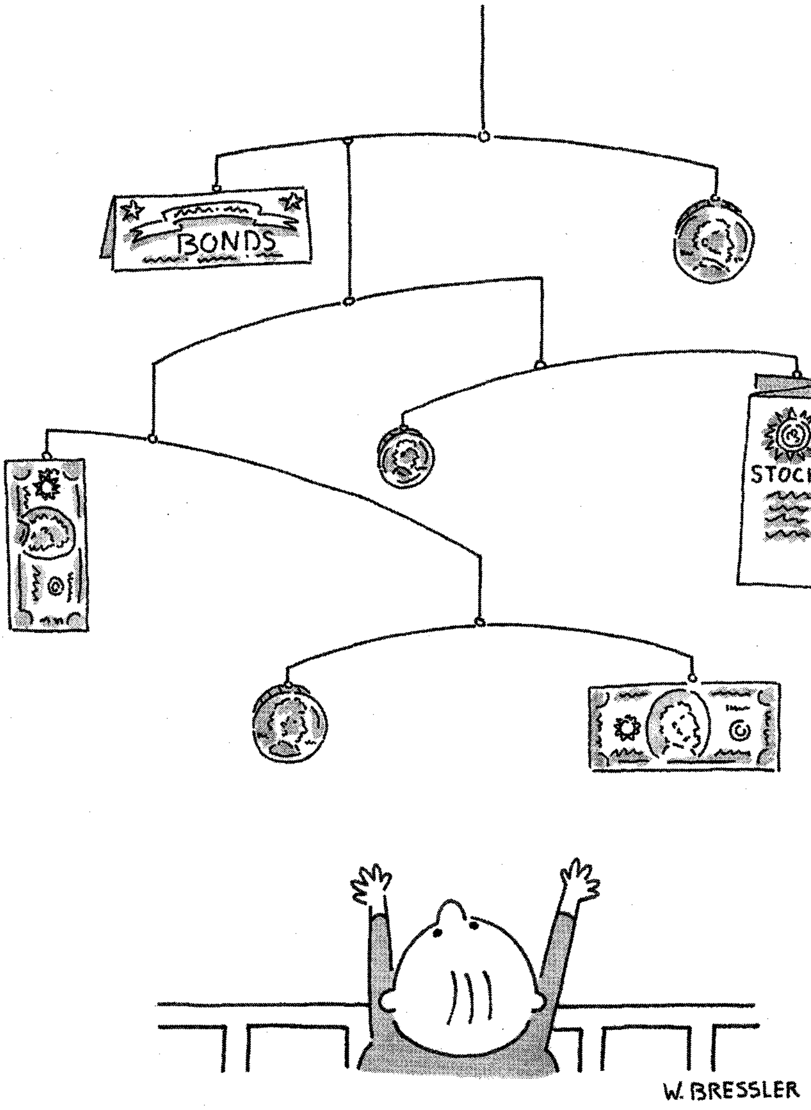
from inertia by an Iris Murdochian belief in the momentousness of sexual attraction (usually described from the male point of view), and by a fine eye and ear for natural detail as well as for footnotes. What one takes away from "Morpho Eugenia," along with all the ant lore and Darwin-darkened philosophizing, are details such as the homely tendency of the beautiful but maturing Eugenia, when asleep, to make "a new, regular, comfortable sort of sound—Eugenia's recent snoring, a ruffling, like a wood-pigeon, a squeak like fingernails on silk, and then a snort like a hungry foal." That nasal squeak like fingernails on silk shows an avid realism. The whole elaborate, marvellous literary pastiche of "Possession" rests upon the drab "palpable present intimate" of late-nineteen-eighties English academia—the London Library, the British Museum Reading Room, the cluttered warrens where scholarly passions are dourly pursued, the decaying tiled crispness of a new provincial university, the dismal Putney basement where the hero, Roland Michell, ekes out a marginal postgraduate career with his pallid, depressed girlfriend, Val, the two of them denied access to the house's back garden by an octogenarian landlady whose pet cats' piss odorously drips through the ceiling.

Relatively few such compellingly pungent particulars anchor the academic London of Byatt's new novel, "The Biographer's Tale" (Knopf; $24); its world is as fancy-tinged, hovering, and bubbly as that of the paired novellas. Its narrator, Phineas Gilbert Nanson, shares with Roland of "Possession" an epic moniker and small stature: "I should perhaps say, now, that I am a very small man. 'Small but perfectly formed' my father would say, several times a day, before



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his disappearance." Byatt's fascination with insect societies, where the fertilizing male is often smaller than the queen, may influence the unusual sizing of her heroes. Phineas's last name echoes that of Fridtjof Nansen (1861-1930), a great Norwegian Arctic explorer, scientist, statesman, and humanitarian. Nanson, like other Byatt heroes, reënacts her own escape from academia into creativity; his adventures begin when he strikes out from the cramped harbor of "postmodernist literary theory," with its monotonous revelation of "the same clefts and crevices, transgressions and disintegrations, lures and deceptions beneath, no matter what surface we were scrying." Amid the doctrinaire uncertainties and aporias of post-structuralist criticism, he hankers for "*things*," and undertakes to research and write the biography of Scholes Destry-Scholes, the obscure author of a masterly three-volume biography of Sir Elmer Bole, a nineteenth-century traveller, consul, translator, and author, tirelessly prolific and polyglot in the superhuman Victorian manner of Sir Richard Burton.

Like Burton, Bole moved on the sexual frontier, marrying "a Turkish lady, Yildiz, the sister of a pasha," and his "childhood sweetheart, Evangeline Solway, daughter of an impoverished evangelical clergyman," in the same year, fathering three sons with the former and three daughters with the latter. His captain's paradise, an alternation between the "red apple" of the Turkish wife and the "green apple" of the English, finds a counterpart as Nanson's researches bring him into the arms of pale, slender, dark-haired Vera Alphage, the elusive Destry-Scholes's niece, and then those of Fulla Biefeld, a stocky Swedish pollination ecologist, with "gold and frizzy and springy" hair "so abundant and energetic that it was almost a separate life-form." To support himself during the search for Destry-Scholes, Nanson takes a "dogsbody" job with Puck's Girdle, a travel agency specializing in exotic customized holiday trips and managed by two harmonious homosexuals, Erik and Christophe, Danish and French respectively; it suggests one of those airy enterprises in Anne Tyler novels, more redolent of authorial ingenuity than of practical viability. Puck's Girdle has an intricate paper Maelstrom in the

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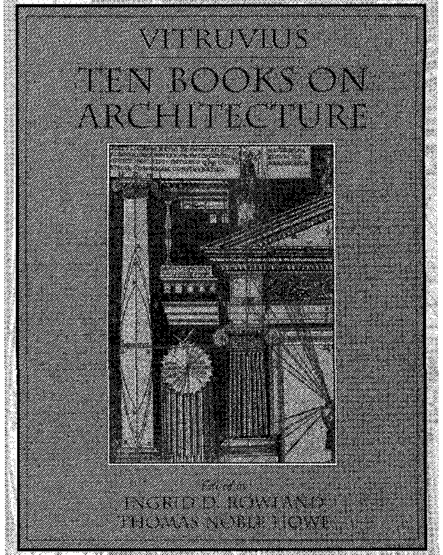

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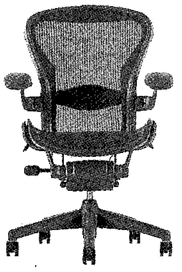

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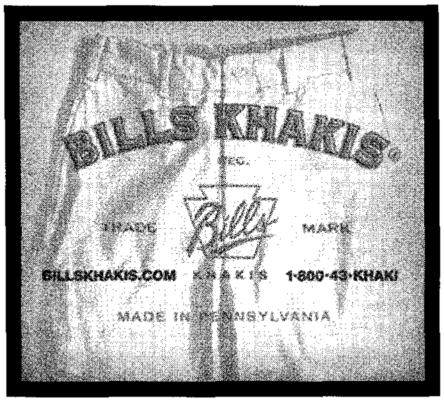

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window, and Destry-Scholes apparently disappeared into the actual Maelstrom, off the coast of Norway. Scandinavia peeps in at numerous of this disjointed tale's junctures.

There is virtually no end to the amount of overlapping symbolification Byatt can generate. "The Biographer's Tale" takes its epigraph from Goethe: "These similitudes are charming and entertaining, and who does not enjoy playing with analogies?" Playful analogies and correspondences on the level of Phineas Nanson's quotidian adventures, with their sudden amorous rewards, pale beside those on the secondary level of quoted text, which occupies intimidatingly large chunks of the novel. One stretch of sixty-six pages, in a (very slightly) different typeface, reproduces Destry-Scholes's notes on aspects of the lives of "CL" (Carolus Linnaeus, the eighteenth-century botanist and taxonomist), "FG" (Sir Francis Galton, a cousin of Charles Darwin, a traveller in the Balkans and Africa, a scientist with an interest in anthropometry and eugenics, composite photographs and fingerprints), and "HI" (Henrik Ibsen, the Norwegian playwright). The idea, as best I can grasp it, seems to be that Destry-Scholes was working toward a kind of composite photograph of the three men, a ghostly overlay of their travels, theories, and lies, which also might blurrily be construed as the portrait of both biographers: "Was the composite portrait the face of Destry-Scholes? Was it, seen in some mad mirror, my own?"

Regardless, the patience of all but a reader superhumanly tolerant of extended digression will creak and snap under the load of near-random texts, assembled by an author whose love of collection, of assembling and ordering, in this case quite overpowers any urge to tell a smooth story. Her point might be that stories are not smooth, that the surface of things, like the textual surface that post-modern critics deconstruct, dissolves into "transgressions and disintegrations, lures and deceptions." Nanson tells Fulla, the personification of full nature, "I had come to the conclusion that literary scholarship was pointless, and so had embarked on biography . . . and now thought that that was pointless, too." He discovers that "*all* writing has a tendency to flow like a river towards the writer's body and the writer's own experience." His account comes most alive when he describes, in generous olfactory detail, making love to Vera and Fulla, and Byatt's novel quickens with it. The rest is a kind of scrapbook, in which we keep encountering collections: shoeboxes of cryptic index cards; "tiny chocolate eggs, each wrapped in a different colour of silver paper"; Michel Foucault's book "Les Mots et les Choses," which comments on Linnaeus and taxonomy; the wildly assorted objects preserved in the London Linnaeus Society; the Vatican's "25,000 numbered trays or bins of coloured mosaic," which grows in a later accounting to "40,000 bins of mosaics [of which] 10,762 were classified." Reality's maddening approach to infinity—its defiance of final inventory—comes to Byatt by way of Borges, the father of post-modern fiction's ramifying, inescapable self-consciousness.

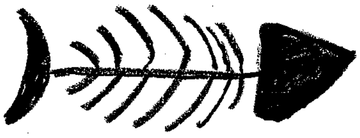
Among Destry-Scholes's baffling gifts to posterity is a bag of three hundred and sixty-six glass marbles, "some obviously very old and beautiful, of many sizes, colours and patterns," along with a notebook recording, in a child's handwriting, mystical-sounding names and categories. Vera Alphage (an X-ray technician—alpha and omega, the truth of bones) obsessively attempts to match the marbles to the names, and to arrange them in a logical order, but this taxonomic exercise is in the end abandoned: "We massed the marbles randomly in a great glass bowl I bought her for a present." Thus disarrayed, the marbles let her relax. Having fled systematic Derridean indeterminacy, Phineas Nanson arrives at appreciation of that near-chaotic thing of things the planet Earth. Reality eludes the nets that criticism and analysis lay "over the nature of things with different meshes and weaves." This seems to be Byatt's moral, crudely put. One of the virtues of her thoughtful, many-layered fiction is to remind us of how crudely, how unprovisionally, most things are put. Although, in "The Biographer's Tale," she takes the reader to the edge of exasperation and beyond, that reader must still be grateful to have the art of fiction reworked in such knowing hands, by one to whom the pleasures and rewards of reading are so fundamental. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Kingdom of Shadows, *by Alan Furst (Random House; $24.95).* In Paris in 1938, Nicholas Morath, a Hungarian aristocrat, enjoys the benefits of his wealth and breeding—benefits that include the company of a beautiful young Argentine girlfriend and control of a successful advertising firm. But the rumblings of the Third Reich are drawing nearer, and when Morath's uncle and benefactor, Count Janos Polanyi, enlists Nicholas to help fight Fascism back in Hungary the playboy becomes a political operative. The sixth of Furst's wartime espionage novels is one of his best, offering a compelling mix of character study and historical fiction (several real military and political leaders have cameos—thankfully, Hitler is not one of them). But the novel's most attractive feature is its matter-of-fact suspense: Furst vigilantly restricts Nicholas's perspective, refusing to allow him anachronistic insight into the history being made around him, and this strategy helps reinvigorate one of the century's frequently told stories.

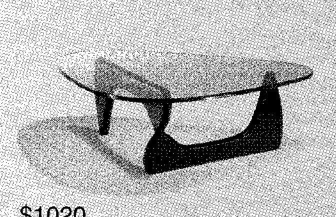
Mystic River, *by Dennis Lehane (Morrow; $25).* Back in the seventies, two boys from the Flats, wily Jimmy Marcus and sad-eyed Dave Boyle, hung around with Sean Devine, who lived twelve blocks away in what passed for a better neighborhood. This Chandleresque novel really starts when their paths cross again: Sean's a cop, Jimmy's daughter is dead, and Dave's a suspect. Lehane's theme is inevitability: once fate has its markers in place, it doesn't fool around. A sense of foreboding provokes the book's best heart-in-your-mouth effects, but the assignment of blame is clear long before the final pages.

Declare, *by Tim Powers (Morrow; $25).* Powers's fans follow him from book to book on the justified assumption that his fantastic imagination will always run ahead of theirs and provide surprise and suspense in abundance. His latest novel, which unfolds in the world of twentieth-century espionage, places malevolent supernatural forces in the service of the Cold War. Powers creates an appallingly life-like portrait of the British traitor Kim Philby, and he orchestrates reality and fantasy so artfully that the reader is not allowed a moment's doubt throughout this tall tale.



Ordinary Horror, *by David Searcy (Viking; $24.95).* When gophers start to burrow around the widower Frank Delabano's prized rosebushes, he buys a rare plant whose roots are guaranteed to drive them away, and his suburban landscape is suddenly filled with portent. In controlled and lyrical prose, Searcy imbues the ordinary with the horrific: dogs disappear; a swarm of cicadas descends; an unidentifiable red powder coats the old man's kitchen; and the little girl next door starts to communicate with him in ominous ways. Searcy's skill is to keep us guessing—never quite letting us know whether the disaster is all in Delabano's mind or whether something has gone terribly wrong with the universe.

The Kill Artist, *by Daniel Silva (Random House; $25.95).* The Mideast peace process is on, and a breakaway Palestinian cell wants to sabotage it. Out of retirement comes the legendary Israeli assassin Gabriel Allon; he must recruit his onetime lover, a French supermodel cum spy, for a plot against the terrorist who, ten years earlier, planted a bomb in the car of his wife and son. The author pulls off the delicate operation of making no political statement whatsoever: this is congenial, undemanding genre fiction, in which even the good guys are bad, and the moral quandaries can't compete with the almost sexual thrill of very dangerous missions executed very well. Silva may never get around to plumbing his characters' souls, but he's having such a good time that we're content just to watch him play.



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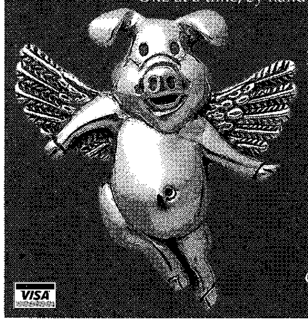

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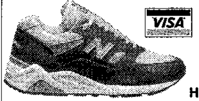

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MUSICAL EVENTS

VIOLENT VIVALDI

"The Four Seasons" as uneasy listening.

BY ALEX ROSS

If you are reading this magazine in a public space, there is a good chance that you are already listening to the music of Antonio Vivaldi. In coffee shops, gourmet-food stores, and commuter rail stations across the land, he is the Muzak of the middle classes, the backbeat of the bourgeois bustle. If *Billboard* had an ur-chart that measured an artist's total exposure in the environment, "The Four Seasons" would probably land at No. 2 or No. 3, up there with "Yesterday" and "Oops! . . . I Did It Again." Adjust the chart to favor artists who have maintained their popularity over time, and Don Antonio, the Red Priest of Venice, who lived from 1678 to 1741, would sweep the field. It won't be

Il Giardino Armonico brings lusty physicality to the music of Vivaldi, which has languishe

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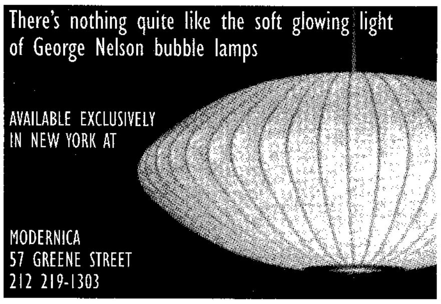

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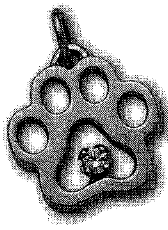

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known until the twenty-third century whether the Beatles possess the same kind of pop appeal.

You may have pigeonholed Vivaldi as the manufacturer of five hundred sewing-machine concertos that all sound more or less the same. Put down the double latte and listen more closely. Most movements of Vivaldi concertos go on no longer than a fifties pop hit, but they are packed with information, invention, and emotion; each work is a game of twists and turns, an arrangement of artful shocks. It is difficult at first to hear the element of surprise in this composer's language, because so many of his tricks have become clichés, but the tricks are still there to be savored: the harnessing of melody to primal rhythm; the painterly use of the orchestra; the celebration of plain chords, with wild harmonic adventures ensuing; the sense of "Checkmate!" at the end, as everything falls beautifully in place.

The stereotype of Vivaldi as a mechanical composer reflects the mechanical style that long prevailed on recordings. Neville Marriner's classic renditions of the concertos, familiar to anyone who has experienced American drive-time classical radio, are smooth, pleasant, and slightly nauseating. But there is now a younger generation of early-music adepts who are determined to resurrect Vivaldi in all his violent grace. They are led by Il Giardino Armonico, a deliriously good Baroque band from Milan, which appeared last month at Alice Tully Hall, and which returns on February 20th to accompany Cecilia Bartoli at Carnegie Hall. If these musicians were to crowd into a Starbucks and tear into "Winter," from "The Four Seasons," the bustle would come to a shivering halt.

as background music for the Starbucks crowd. Photograph by Michael James O'Brien.

Vivaldi was a fiery, arrogant, faintly suspect character, whose life is documented only in intriguing glimpses. For much of his career, he was the resident composer and violin master of the Ospedale della Pietà, a Venetian orphanage for girls, which doubled as one of the finest conservatories in Italy. He achieved widespread fame for his first concerto publications—"L'Estro Armonico," in 1711, and "La Stravaganza," in 1716—and also acquired a reputation as a maverick. He tested the patience of his employers with insatiable financial demands, shocked pedantic minds with his disdain for convention, bristled against the slightest hint of criticism, and created a scandal by carrying on an ambiguous alliance with the diva Anna Girò. He seems to have been the Wagner of the Baroque, making enemies as easily as he made friends.

Although his music lapsed into obscurity after his death, to be revived only in the nineteen-twenties, Vivaldi was vastly influential during his lifetime. An 1802 biography of Johann Sebastian Bach makes the astonishing but apparently authoritative claim that the Master "learned to think musically" from his study of Vivaldi's concertos. What could the creator of the "St. Matthew Passion" have owed to the inventor of "The Four Seasons"? Everything, the Bach scholar Christoph Wolff suggests. It used to be said that Bach took from his Italian contemporary a superficial interest in melody, but the influence went deeper than that. Vivaldi offered a template for building and sustaining musical tension within a steady-state harmonic universe.

Modern tonality took shape over the course of the seventeenth century, as melodic writing pushed aside the art of counterpoint, and Vivaldi manipulated the new language with godlike assurance. In a typical opening—that of the "Tempesta di Mare" Concerto is a good example—the full ensemble dances joy-

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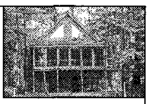

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ously around a simple tonic-dominant progression, decorating it with rushing scales, driving rhythms, and piercing timbres. If these recurring ensemble passages, or ritornellos, are played with anything less than all-out enthusiasm, they can sound static and dull. The best modern Baroque groups—Il Giardino Armonico, the Venice Baroque Orchestra, and Romanesca—deliver them with lusty physicality, recapturing the freshness of the idiom.

Having seized his audience's attention, Vivaldi liked to hold it through a sequence of mysterious digressions. In contrasting episodes, and in the slow movements at the center of each concerto, purposeful rhythm often gives way to a lethargy of suspended chords and free-floating solo lines. Early-music virtuosos such as the violinist Andrew Manze have taken to adding improvised touches to these spare, nocturnal textures; Manze's entrancing command of Baroque violin technique can be heard on a Harmonia Mundi recording entitled "Concert for the Prince of Poland." In the Largo of the "Tempesta di Mare," he drops in an impressionistic whole-tone scale, which somehow sounds perfectly apt.

The members of Il Giardino Armonico, in their many recordings for Teldec, go even further in disrupting the courtly veneer that is associated with Baroque style. They indulge in salacious glissandos, folkish, off-center tunings, thuggish thwacks of the bow, and other touches of fancy. Is this modernist exaggeration, or is it a fair approximation of Vivaldi's own technique? One bit of documentary evidence, a report on a Vivaldi concert of 1715, suggests that the Italians are at least headed in the right direction: "Towards the end, Vivaldi played a solo accompaniment—splendid—to which he appended a cadenza which really frightened me, for such playing has never been nor can be."

You can go into Tower Records and buy a suitcase-size boxed set of the complete Mozart or the complete Beethoven. There is no sign yet of a complete Vivaldi, but watch out: the indefatigable Hyperion label, which put out thirty-seven discs of Schubert songs, has launched a survey of Vivaldi's church music. The composer's inspiration may wax and wane as he makes his way through the larger sacred forms, but when his mind is fully engaged the effect is tremendous; in the "Stabat Mater," he restrains his penchant for vivid contrast and allows a melancholy tune to float to celestial heights. Robert King and the King's Consort give lustrous, immaculate performances throughout this series, which now stands at Volume Six.

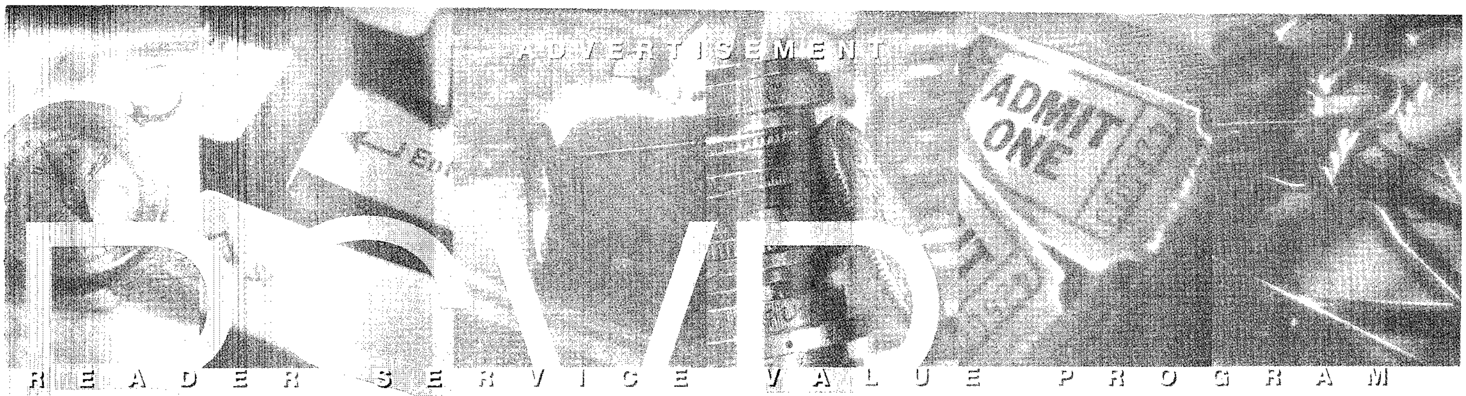
The great unknown is the corpus of Vivaldi operas—at least twenty survive. Cecilia Bartoli, in her forthcoming concert with Il Giardino Armonico, will present several arias that she and the musicologist Claudio Osele have culled from the Vivaldi archives in Turin. The arias also appear on a Decca CD, "The Vivaldi Album." "Gelido in ogni vena," from the opera "Farnace," is an awe-inspiring transformation of music from "The Four Seasons": the icy chords of "Winter" underpin great downward scales of lament as the title character, gazing at the tomb of his son, rides multiple waves of grief. Bartoli will also sing two savagely expressive arias from the oratorio "Juditha Triumphans."

Vivaldi, more than any of his predecessors, saw music as an art of conflict and change. His concertos follow a seemingly predictable formula, but nothing turns out quite as expected; melodies jump from key to key, slip into the minor mode, stop short, go on longer than usual, break into fragments. One scholar has argued that this startling new language helped to create a more "active" mode of listening, in which audiences learned to follow an instrumental narrative as they would the action of an opera. It is telling that Vivaldi's all-girl orchestra had to remain hidden behind a grille, for propriety's sake, when it performed at the Pietà; the result must have been a kind of theatre of liberated sound, with the composer as protagonist. A century before Beethoven, the heroic age of music was under way. ♦

From the New York Review of Books.

One finds oneself murmuring, with Henry James: "Really, universally, relations stop nowhere, and the exquisite problem of the artist is eternally but to draw, by a geometry of his own, the circle in which they shall happily *appear* to do so."

Murmur more, sir!



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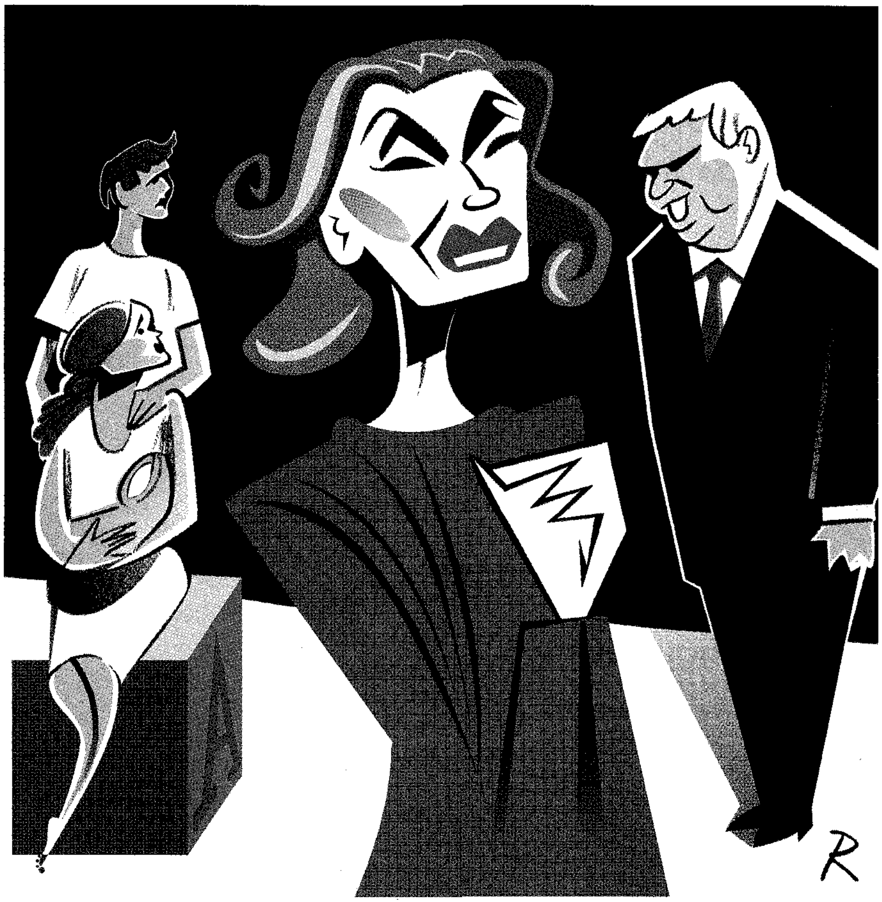
THE THEATRE

SONG OF EXPERIENCE

Albee on the unsettling facts of life.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Edward Albee named his most recent work "The Play About the Baby" for the fun of it—he liked the idea of the confusing, Abbott-and-Costello scenario that would result when you told people that you'd seen his play and they asked what it was called. You'd say, "The Play About the Baby," and they'd say, "Yes, but what's it *called*?" First seen at London's Almeida Theatre, in 1998, and at Houston's Alley Theatre last year, the play is now running in New York, at the Century Center for the Performing Arts, and its title is only the beginning of the mischief—serious and often hilarious mischief—that it whips up. Albee has said that a play, if it's good, is "an act of aggression against the status quo," and what's onstage at the Century Center, under the direction of David Esbjornson, is both that and, in some ways, an act of aggression against the audience. But the game it engages you in is fascinating and bracing, well worth playing. It demands your undivided attention, as you duck, deflect, and absorb the blows. In that sense, it is classic Albee: as Irene Worth put it in Mel Gussow's invaluable 1999 biography of the playwright, "The one thing I'm sure of is that the great theme of Edward's life is *pay attention*—and it is in every play."



Two masters give a lesson in the ways of the world in "The Play About the Baby."

From the moment you walk into the theatre, you have the sense that you're in a disturbing fun-house environment. The brightly lit stage is bare except for some oversized props: a pacifier the size of a satellite dish and a pair of children's alphabet blocks big enough to sit on. A wicker pram and a rocking horse hang precariously above the heads of the characters, the first of whom we see are a boy and a girl, perched on the blocks. The girl announces that she's ready to give birth, and toddles offstage with the boy, and soon we hear, in rapid succession, her screaming, a slap, and a baby crying. It's a very efficient process, this slapstick delivery—it's over in seconds, and the boy and the girl (David Burtka and Kathleen Early) are then free to return to their infantile preoccupation with themselves and each other. She tells him how much she likes to lick his armpits—particularly the left one. He tells her a story about some bullies breaking his arm, and ends up on the floor, being comforted at the girl's breast. When this idyll of self-absorption is over, a man (Brian Murray) walks onto the stage. This is when things get complicated, or, at least, mysterious. We don't know who he is, nor do we have any clue to the identity of the woman (Marian Seldes) who comes on in the next scene. Their long monologues tell us something about them, but we don't know what their relation is to the boy and the girl or to each other. (The characters are identified simply as Man, Woman, Boy, and Girl.) We do know, though, that they are unmistakably adults; they are more than twice the age of their youthful counterparts, who are in their twenties but seem like overgrown infants, and they dress the way some adults still do—the man in a coat and tie, the woman in an elegant purple dress and matching jacket—whereas the young people are barefoot and not wearing much of anything or, sometimes, anything at all. The man and the woman don't seem to be older versions of the boy and the girl, but they do appear to represent what life has in store for them, and perhaps sooner than they expect. The man and the woman both have a droll sense of humor—and that, combined with Murray's and Seldes's perfect timing, gives them an irresistible power to charm. As they tell stories about themselves, they are at once entrancing and suspect; because they have so fully mastered their feelings and come to terms with their losses, to the point where their feelings and losses have

ROBERT RISKO

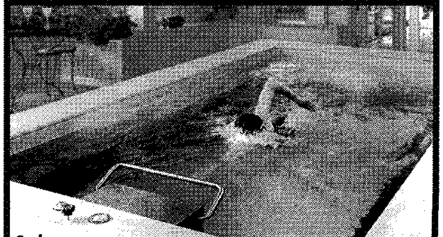
become the centerpieces of an entertaining performance, you can't help thinking that they're hiding at least as much as they're revealing.

The presence of the man and the woman, and the presence of Murray and Seldes in those roles, kicks "The Play About the Baby" up to a breathtaking pitch. If the play is about a baby (Albee has said that the baby is real, not imaginary—as in "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?"—but you may see things differently), it is also about life itself and how one faces the tidal waves of troubles, the arbitrary, irrational injuries, that come with time; it is about the theatre and theatricality, about language, about a writer and his audience. It's a kind of chamber piece, but, while four parts are necessary, the richer, deeper notes all belong to the man and the woman: it's a piece for two cellos and two toy pianos. The boy, fearing that the older people have come to take his baby, wonders why anyone would want to hurt him or the girl. (Interestingly, neither the boy nor the girl worries about whether the *baby* would be hurt.) "I can take pain and loss and all the rest *later*—I *think* I can, when it comes as natural as . . . sleep? But . . . now? We're *happy;* we love each other; I'm hard all the time; we have a baby. We don't even under*stand* each other yet!" He's asking for time, but his pleas are no defense against the ravages of adulthood, and of adult cleverness. Murray's man is merciless. Deliberately coming onstage for the second act while some audience members are still returning to their seats, he takes aim and fires at them: "Hurry back in, now; you don't want to miss the exposition. Well, maybe you do." Then he pretends to be an annoyed theatregoer, huffily saying, "Honestly! You'd think they'd have it in the *first* act."

When it comes to his reception among critics and producers in New York, Albee has endured, in his forty-two-year career, two spectacular spells of they-love-me (he is in one now, and has been since 1994, when "Three Tall Women" was staged here) and, in between, a long and spectacular they-love-me-not period. (I leave audiences out of this equation, because New York audiences couldn't see any of his new work from 1983 to 1994.) Going by what he has said in interviews, he has dealt with his professional ups and downs with as much equanimity as is humanly possible. He didn't have a comeback, because he never went away—that is to say, he never stopped writing, which is itself the best revenge. But there are moments in this play when Albee doesn't seem to quite forgive his audience for being human. Murray, continuing his vamping after the intermission by imitating an annoyed woman, says, "You'd think they'd build the ladies' restrooms bigger; after all these years you'd think they'd have noticed the lines!" (Yeah, what's *up* with that?) Or, just as likely, perhaps Albee is making a point about the conventions of the theatregoing experience—the falseness of this fifteen-minute stretch of imposed mundanity, after which both the performers and the audience have to reënter the illusions built up in the first act. In this case, though, the shifts in tone during and just after Murray's monologue are so surprising and so riveting that you're immediately rapt again.

Seldes, for her part, is thrilling. She brings a precisely calibrated theatricality to her role. As a character, she delivers pain to the young couple; as a performer, brimming with concentrated virtuosity in her speech and in her physicality, she causes in her audience, less schooled in control than she, an unbounded, over-the-top pleasure. She and Murray play together beautifully, at times mocking each other, at other times conspiring, and at all times deftly manipulating and winning over the audience as they deftly brutalize the innocents onstage.

"The Play About the Baby" is a cold, starry night of a play—even as you shiver, you feel grateful for the brilliant light that shines down from it, and which, maybe, will help you see where you're going. But much remains unexplained in the play; its clarity is wrapped in mystery. At one point, the man badgeringly says to the boy and the girl, "If you don't have the wound of a broken heart, how can you know you're alive? If you have no broken heart, how do you know who you are? Have been? Can ever be?" Intelligent, important questions, all of them, and well, if cruelly, put. Albee has the wisdom and the experience to raise them, the skill not to impose too much dramatic weight on them, and the grace not to try to answer them. ♦



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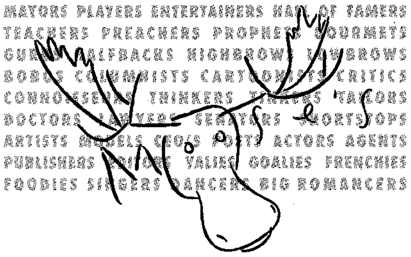

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THE CURRENT CINEMA

FRENCH CONNECTIONS

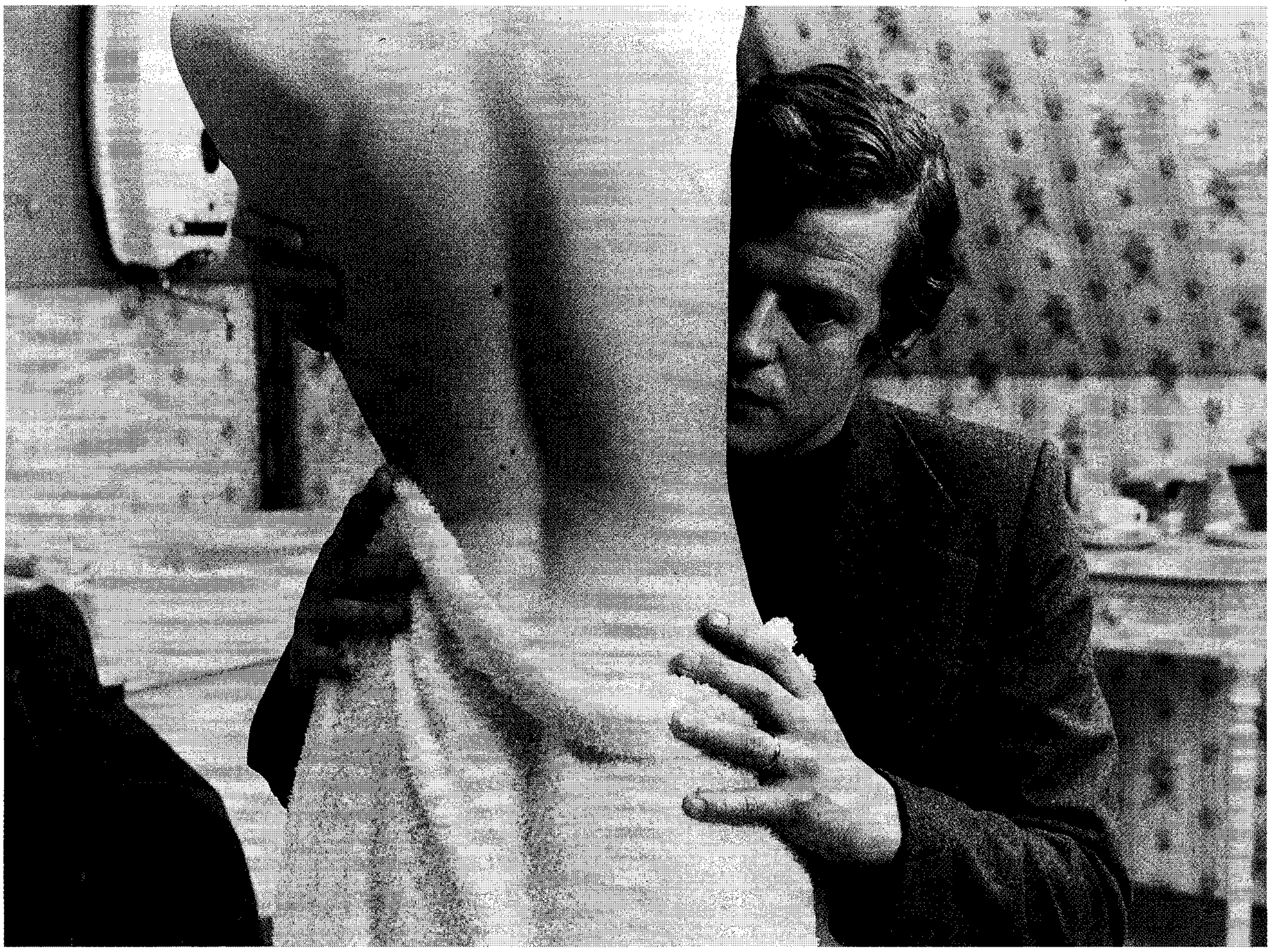
A season of Eric Rohmer's men and women.

BY DAVID DENBY

In Eric Rohmer's movies, the men and women possess an extraordinary talent so lavishly indulged that it threatens to become a vice. They *talk*, launching themselves confidently into opinion, interpretation, and paradox, quoting Pascal in noisy restaurants at the drop of a spoon. Rohmer's alarming teen-agers, barely sixteen, spout full-blown theories of love; the adults, without provocation, announce their categorical whims—that beauty is everything, that beauty is nothing, that they are no longer interested in sex, that they want to "burn with love." If Jay Gatsby, as Fitzgerald said, sprang from a Platonic conception of himself, Rohmer's characters spring from a Platonic conception of the French as fully articulate and sociable creatures, crooning an ideal language of erotic choice. There are introspective characters in Rohmer, but none who are silent. In "Summer" (1986), Marie Rivière's desperately lonely Delphine speaks at considerable length about her inability to talk. This bizarre French fluency, so brilliant, self-conscious, and self-delighted, leaves many of us caught in an uneasy limbo between admiration and ridicule. The intellectual energy stirs us, but the form of it, to American ears, seems too conventional and abstract, too rhymed, too sonorous—the actors seem almost to be reciting in stanzas. For all I know, Rohmer may agree: he sets traps for his characters even as they float blissfully through the higher nonsense of discourse. In "Claire's Knee" (1970), the diplomat hero who is about to be married announces that other women no longer interest him and then proceeds to flirt with every woman in sight, making a fool of himself over and over. Yet Rohmer is less a satirist than an observer of the self-delusions inherent in erotic behavior. His characters may believe that their moods have the power of universal law, but in the end they experience not triumph but the banal irritations of thwarted egotism. When they stumble, their prating foolishness suddenly seems charming.

At first Rohmer was a literature teacher, and then, in the nineteen-fifties and sixties, a film critic—a fellow-conspirator at *Cahiers du Cinéma* with Truffaut, Godard, and Chabrol, the insolent young men who would supplant their elders in the French film industry after 1959. Rohmer, older than the others by a decade, began making short films as early as 1950, but he got a later start as a feature-film director, achieving international success only in 1969, with "My Night at Maud's." He was then almost fifty; he's now eighty, and still making movies about men and women falling in and out of love. As he works on his latest, a period piece entitled "L'Anglaise et le Duc," there's a retrospective under way at Film Forum—a five-week show encompassing twenty-two movies. Thirteen of them will travel to selected theatres across the country in the coming months. Most of the prints are brand new, and the color should be superb, which is crucial, since Rohmer, obsessed with creating the ideal palette for talk and romance, has made some of the most sombrely beautiful movies of all time. I saw "Claire's Knee" thirty years ago, on a day in New York when the sidewalks were black with ice, and I still haven't gotten over it. Set at a lake at the foot of the Alps in Haute-Savoie, "Claire's Knee" offers a thrilling outburst of gold, blue, and green—ravishing yet somehow chaste landscapes filled with handsome people speaking Rohmerese. As thick clouds hang over the mountains, the diplomat (Jean-Claude Brialy) cruises the glistening lake in his boat, and I had never felt so strong an urge to *be* in a place shown onscreen, so eager a wish to be drawn into its life.

A limpid atmosphere pulls us into all of Rohmer's movies. His frame breathes easily; the light is even, the compositions uncluttered, though never austere or ominous in the Antonioni manner. The air



Bernard Verley in Rohmer's "Chloe in the Afternoon" (1972). The director is a sensualist disciplined by the demands of elegance.

PHOTOFEST

feels palpable, anticipatory. Working with such cinematographers as Nestor Almendros and Bernard Lutic, Rohmer is superb at capturing the emotional quality of specific times of day—the melancholy of the country in early evening, or of the suburbs at dawn. In Paris parks, he settles on an erotic dark matting of grass; his long-view landscapes are as grave and luminous as Courbet's. Even in small Paris rooms, the light is never hot and yellowish in the Hollywood style but just bright enough for us to see what his women are feeling. Incapable of an ugly or a ragged shot, Rohmer is a sensualist disciplined by the implacable demands of elegance, a man drawn by temperament to the composure of earlier centuries—surely the most accomplished classicist in modern movies.

The lightweight plots, with their intellectual-farce construction, take a surprising amount of time to get going; moments of dithering self-definition stall the intrigue. But after a while the coincidences and embarrassments mount up, and then, in the decisive style of classic French fiction, the dénouement arrives in a rush, followed by a curt "*Fin*," and it's over—a completed anecdote, something *told*, never to be confused with a piece of life. The act of telling means a great deal to Rohmer, especially for what it reveals of the teller. Often we listen as one character relates to another an action that we have just seen; the narrated story, and the response to it, become the new action of the movie. Rohmer has expunged guns, car chases, and blood from movies, though not always to our delight. Yet it isn't fair to dismiss him, as some have, as weakly "literary." The fusillade of talk, however absurd at first hearing, conquers us in the end because the dialogue is so firmly planted in landscape, so functional as dramatic material. For all his aphorisms and balanced clauses, Rohmer is an entertainer.

In "Claire's Knee," the lecherous diplomat is on vacation; Rohmer's characters are always on vacation. Apart from the earlier period works "Perceval" and "The Marquise of O," the movies have been set among the bourgeoisie at play; or among students stuck in the limbo of graduate studies; or among young Parisians who spend as little time as possible working (they're always breaking for coffee or tea or rushing to meet someone). To work hard in Rohmer's world is to make oneself unavailable for the serious activities of life—flirting and the analysis of relationships. Ambition and money do not matter to his characters, nor does class, since most of these people are educated into the only class that counts—the stylish and the articulate. The women living in single rooms in Paris seem quite content with their limited space; they have the freedom to think and speak.

Rohmer is a master, but a minor master. He is obsessed with sex and love but indifferent to the necessary social circumstances of passion which command the greatest makers of fiction—Balzac, for instance, one of Rohmer's favorite authors, who never ignored fiction's bedrock in money, power, and greed. Even Henry James, with whom Rohmer has sometimes been compared, displayed an over-

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powering interest in money and in the bullying influence of one person over another. James wrote novels with titles like "The Spoils of Poynton" and "The Golden Bowl." He wants to know—and his characters need to know—where the loot is buried. Rohmer doesn't want to know. His movies have titles like "Chloe in the Afternoon" and "Pauline at the Beach." His appointed task is the appreciation of women: connoisseurship. Of course, this is no small matter, but at times Rohmer's preoccupation with it brings him close to fashion-magazine chic and mere expertise—the traditional French cult of refined female beauty and style. Many people in his movies talk of their physical "types," and there's no mistaking Rohmer's type—slender women with small breasts, skinny but shapely legs, full hair and full bottoms. What redeems and ennobles Rohmer's connoisseurship is his idiosyncratic conception of beauty. In "Pauline at the Beach" (1983), he dismisses the obvious goddess—Arielle Dombasle, of the fairy-tale-princess golden mane—as insipidly perfect. By contrast, Béatrice Romand, with her expressive pout, the fretting Marie Rivière, the tiny Pascale Ogier, who died at twenty-five, and whose tinkling voice yielded a surprising poignancy, are more Rohmer's style. The women are spiritual, stubborn, and generally dissatisfied; the men, embodied by actors like Jean-Claude Brialy, Patrick Bauchau, Bernard Verley, and Fabrice Luchini, tend to be canting egotists—often prigs masquerading as libertines, and therefore rule-bound, ruthless, and self-protecting. Most of the comedy is directed at them, though Béatrice Romand, playing a woman who sets out to choose a husband in "Le Beau Mariage" (1982), is perhaps the most foolishly boastful character in French film.

No one in the history of art has paid closer attention than Rohmer to first encounters between the sexes, the brazen instance of appraisal, the dance of advance and retreat, aggression and denial. As a chronicler of attraction, Rohmer possesses the advantage of living in a culture in which people on the street stare at each other frankly, without the wary self-consciousness typical of New York or Chicago. The ice immediately broken, or quickly melted, Rohmer attends to the busy punctuation of French social ritual, the handshakes and double kisses and inquiries ("*Ça va?*" "*Oui, ça va*"). But the politeness gives way to a lacerating candor that is also unknown in America. In "My Night at Maud's," one of Rohmer's best movies, Françoise Fabian, a sexy divorcée, lies naked under a fur blanket while Jean-Louis Trintignant's engineer, a Catholic puritan, stretches out beside her fully dressed. They talk of desire, chance, the possibility of happiness—nothing as elegantly brusque has been heard in cinema in the last thirty years. Watching these scenes again, I thought they had hardly aged. Rohmer has never allowed politics or pop culture to enter into his work. Allowing for certain changes in hair style and clothes, the movies could all be set in the present.

Yet one's emotional response to these literally timeless stories is often muted—a long, deep sigh of satisfaction, but nothing more. The one movie that touches the audience deeply is "Summer," which may be Rohmer's masterpiece. Poor Delphine! A miserable, life-denying girl—she won't eat anything, she won't talk to strange men—Delphine scandalizes Paris with her inability to take a summer vacation. Every time she leaves town, she gets disgusted and comes back. The movie is delicately but piercingly funny: Delphine is a mess, yet she is intensely sympathetic, too, a version of any one of us in our more hapless moments. Rohmer is on her side, of course; she's too finely tuned to banter with careless men at a beach resort. The movie's French title—"Le Rayon Vert"—is taken from Jules Verne, and it refers to the instant at sunset, on very clear days, when the refraction of the light produces a sudden green ray. Anyone lucky enough to see it, according to Verne, will gain insight into his own feelings and the feelings of the person next to him. At the climax of the movie, the maddening chatter ceases, the sententious yammer falls away, and, in a moment of silence, Rohmer brings his unhappiest female creation close to something like bliss. ♦

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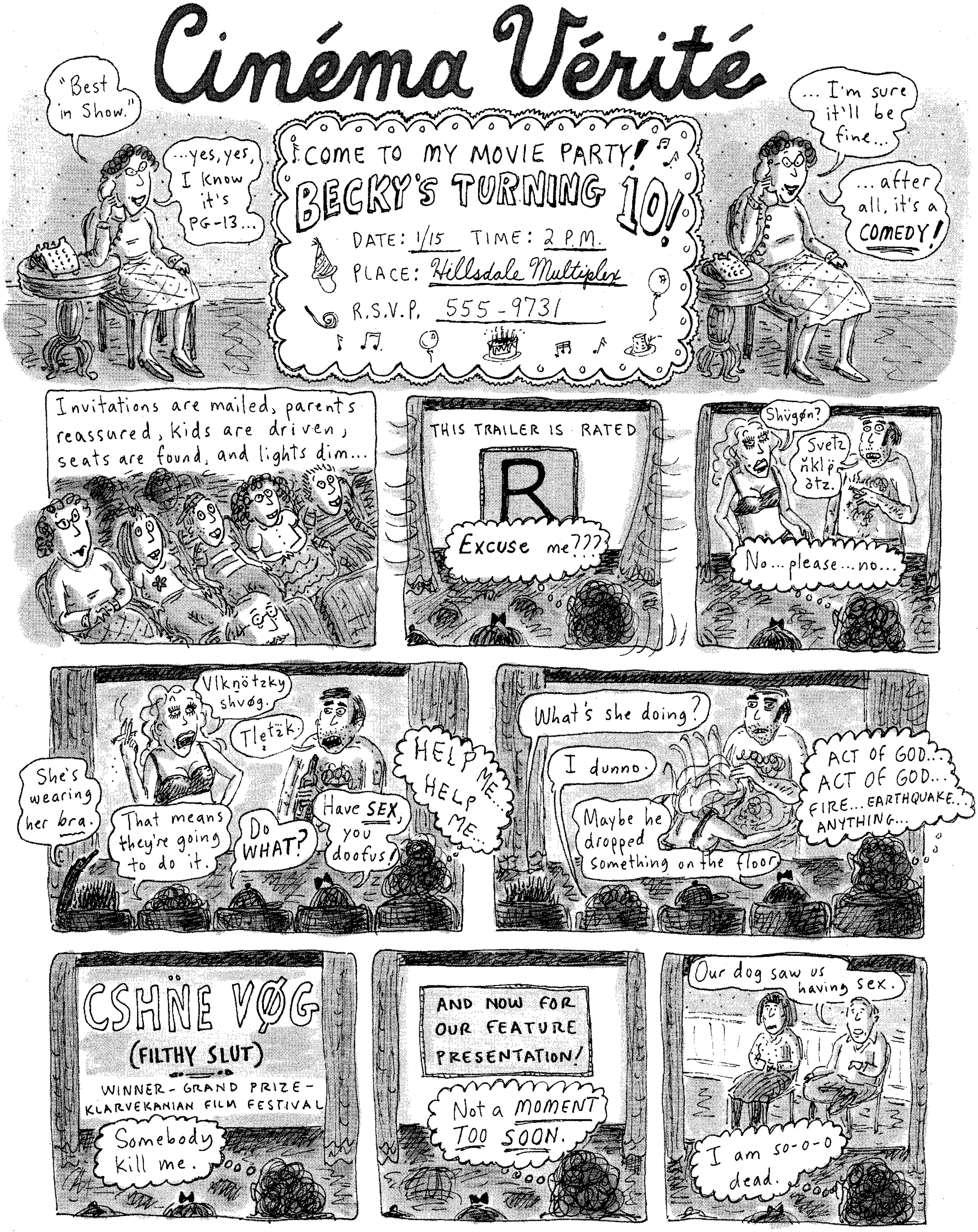
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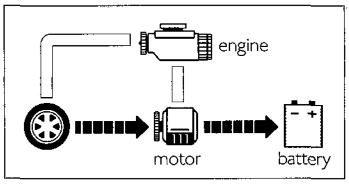

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